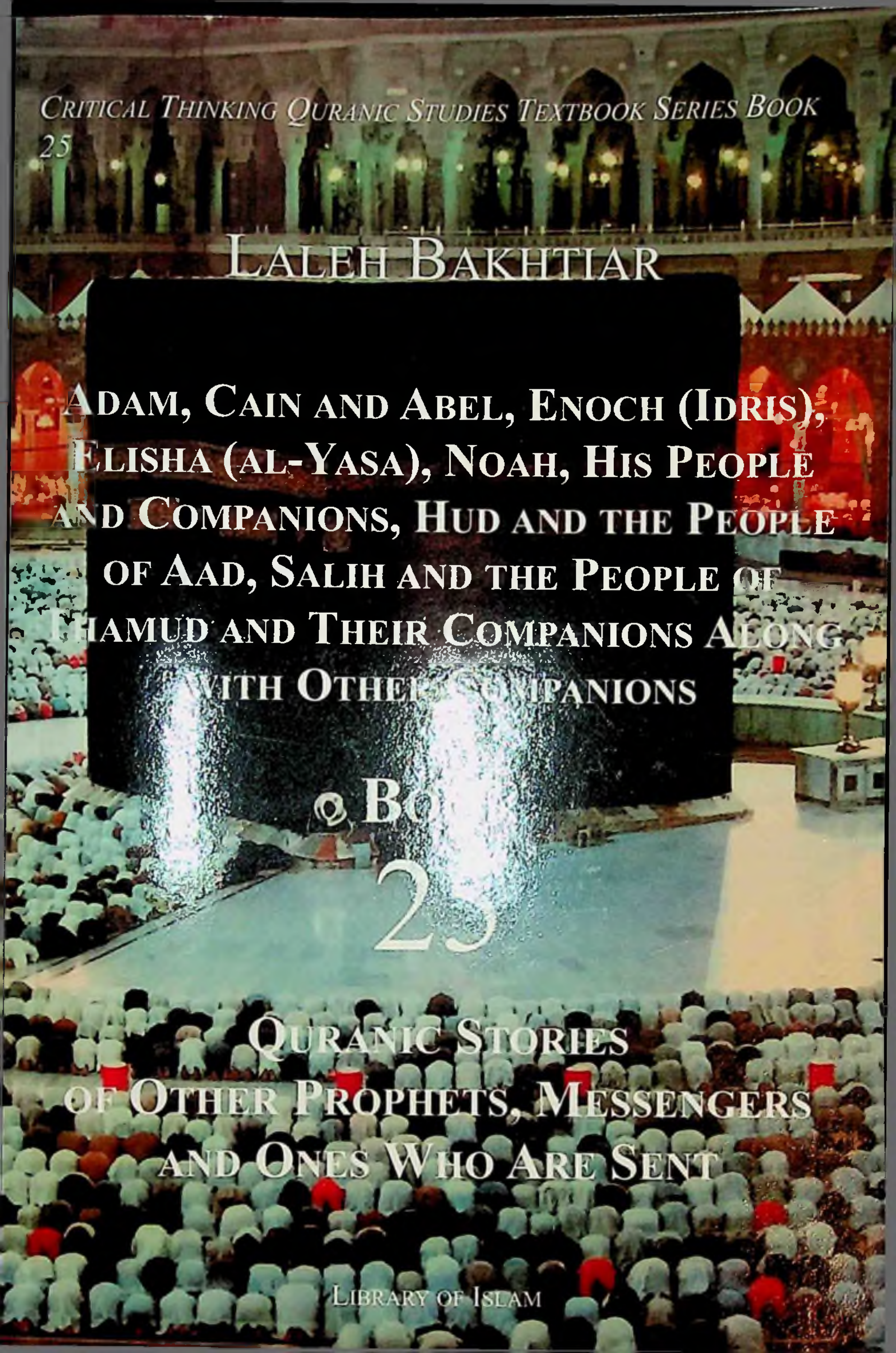

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Book 25

Laleh Bakhtiar

Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Elisha (al-Yasa), Noah, His People and Companions, Hud and the People of Aad, Salih and the People of Thamud and Their Companions Along with Other Companions

Book

25

Quranic Stories of Other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

Library of Islam

CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES BOOK 25

LALEH BAKHTIAR

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran*. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3 Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God.

The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muham-

mad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

12. All the signs in the text are in chronological order.

Laleh Bakhtiar, PhD
Chicago 2017

ADAM

By the middle Meccan period of the revelation (ca. 615-618 CE), the early Muslims hear the story of Adam, the first human being. The Quran does not refer to him as a Prophet, a Messenger nor as One Who is Sent. It does say, however, that there will be Prophets among his offspring and for that reason we have included him here. We will study the signs regarding Adam, as well as that of the rest of the Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who are Sent through the Quranic signs in chronological order so we have a sense of how the Quran taught the early Muslims about them.

THE GREAT TIDINGS

CHAPTER 38: THE 38TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Your Lord said to the angels:*
Truly, I am one who is Creator of a mortal from clay. (38:71)
So when I shaped him and breathed into him My Spirit,
then, fall to him, ones who prostrate themselves. (38:72)
So the angels prostrated themselves,
one and all, altogether (38:73)
but Iblis. He grew arrogant
and had been among the ones who are ungrateful. (38:74)
He said: O Iblis! What prevented you from prostrating thyself
to what I created with My two hands?
Had you grown arrogant?
Or had you been among the ones who exalt themselves? (38:75)
Iblis said: I am better than he. You had created me from fire while
You had created him from clay. (38:76)
He said: Then, go you forth from here
for, truly, you are accursed. (38:77)
And, truly, on you is My curse until the Day of Judgment. (38:78)
Iblis said: My Lord! Then, give me respite
until the Day to be raised up. (38:79)
He said: Truly, you are among the ones
who are given respite (38:80)
until the Day of the known time. (38:81)
Iblis said: By Your Great Glory,
then, I will certainly lead them one and all into error, (38:82)
but Your devoted servants among them. (38:83)
He said: This is The Truth and The Truth I say (38:84)
that I will fill hell with you and with one
and all of whoever heeded you. (38:85)

COMMENTARY°

Mention, when your Lord said to the angels, *Truly, I am one who is Creator of a mortal from clay*, and this was Adam. (38:71) So when I have proportioned him, completed him, and breathed in him, when I have caused to flow therein, My Spirit, so that he becomes a living being—the addition of 'the Spirit' to Adam is an honor for him; the 'Spirit' is a subtle body that gives life to a human being by permeating him—then fall down in prostration before him!— a prostration of salutation that is actually a bow. *So when I shaped him and breathed into him My Spirit, then, fall to him, ones who prostrate themselves.* (38:72) *So the angels prostrated themselves, one and all, altogether* (38:73) except Iblis, the father of the jinn, who was among the audience of angels; he was disdainful and he was one of the disbelievers, according to God's knowledge, exalted be He.

THE CREATION OF ADAM AND THE DEFIANCE OF SATAN

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created you.*
Again, We formed you.
Again, We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam!
Then, they prostrated themselves, but Iblis.
He would not be of the ones who prostrate themselves. (7:11)
He said: What prevented you
from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?
Satan said: I am better than he.
You had created me of fire
and You had created him of clay. (7:12)
He said: So get you down from this!
It will not be for you to increase in pride in it.
Then, you go forth.
Truly, you are of the ones who are disgraced. (7:13)
Satan said: Give me respite
until the Day they are raised up. (7:14)
He said: Truly, you are
among the ones who are given respite. (7:15)
Satan said: Because You had led me into error, certainly, I will sit
in ambush for them on Your path, one that is straight. (7:16)
Again, I will approach them from between the front of them and
from behind them and from their right and from their left.
And You will not find many of them ones who are thankful. (7:17)
He said: Go you forth from this—one who is scorned,
one who is rejected.

Whoever heeded you among them, I will, certainly,
fill hell with you, one and all. (7:18)
And: O Adam! Inhabit you and your spouse the Garden
and both eat from where you both willed,
but neither of you come near this tree
or you both will be of the ones who are unjust. (7:19)
And Satan whispered evil to them both to show them both
what was kept secret from them both—their intimate parts.
And he said: The Lord of both of you prohibited
you both from this tree so that neither of you be angels
nor be ones who will dwell forever. (7:20)
And he swore an oath to them both
that I am the one who gives advice to both of you. (7:21)
Then, he led both of them on to delusion.
Then, when they both experienced of the tree,
the intimate parts of both showed to both themselves
and both of them took to doing stitching together
over both from the leaves of the Garden.
And the Lord of both of them proclaimed to them:
Prohibited I not both of you from that tree?
And said I not to both of you:
Truly, Satan is a clear enemy of you both. (7:22)
They both said: Our Lord! We did wrong to ourselves.
And if You will not forgive us and have mercy on us,
we will, certainly, be among the ones who are losers. (7:23)
He said: Get you down, some of you an enemy to some other.
And for you on the earth an appointed time
and enjoyment for awhile. (7:24)
He said: You will live in it and you will die in it
and from it you will be brought out. (7:25)

COMMENTARY°

Iblis/Satan belongs to a different type of creation, separate from the angels. He is created out of fire while they are created out of light. They do not disobey God, whatever His command may be. He, on the other hand, disobeyed God, rejecting His command. For certain, then, he is not, and never was, one of the angels. That we have here a form of exception, more strongly pronounced in the Arabic text, refers to what is called in Arabic linguistics 'inconsequential exception'. It is acceptable to say in Arabic: The Joneses have come except for Ahmad, when you know that Ahmad does not belong to the Jones family, but is always with them. Now since the order stated here has been issued to the angels, how could it apply to Iblis? This is clear proof that Iblis was given the same command. He might have been included in the command given to the angels, if he was with them at the time, or perhaps a separate order was issued to him. However, this is not mentioned here and this shows that he is of a far lesser position than the angels. Furthermore, the texts we have, and Satan's own behavior, all demonstrate that he was not one of the angels.

OFFSPRING OF ADAM GIVEN PROPHETHOOD

CHAPTER 19: THE 44TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah 622: *Those are those to whom God was gracious*
from among the Prophets of the offspring of Adam
and whomever We carried with Noah
and of the offspring of Abraham and Israel, Jacob,
from among whomever We guided and elected.
When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful
they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves. (19:58)

COMMENTARY°

These are they those whom I mentioned: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, Idris and all the prophets unto whom God showed favor from among the prophets God favored them with prophethood, the message and Islam, of the seed of Adam and of those whom We carried in the ship with Noah the offspring of Noah, and of the seed of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob (Israel) and of the offspring of Jacob: Joseph and his brothers, and from among those whom We guided those whom We favor.

Clearly the Prophets among the offspring of Adam, and Noah and the ofspring of Abraham and Jacob were developing their perspectives by God's guidance to them.

ANGELS COMMANDED TO PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE ADAM

CHAPTER 20: THE 45TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We made a compact*
with Adam before. (20:115)
Then, he forgot and We find no constancy in him.
And when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
They prostrated themselves, but Iblis who refused. (20:116)
Then, We said: O Adam! Truly, this is an enemy to you
and to your spouse, so let him not drive you
both out from the Garden

so that you would be in despair. (20:117)
Truly, it is not for you that you hunger in it
nor to be naked. (20:118)
And, truly, you will not thirst in it
nor suffer the heat of the sun. (20:119)
Then, Satan whispered evil to him.
He said: O Adam! Will I point you to the Tree of Infinity
and a dominion that will not decay? (20:120)
Then, they both ate from that so the intimate parts
of both showed to both themselves.
Both of them took to doing stitching together
over both from the leaves of the Garden.
And Adam rebelled against his Lord and he erred. (20:121)
Again, his Lord elected him.
Then, He turned in forgiveness to him and guided him. (20:122)
He said: Get you both down from here altogether,
some of you an enemy to some others.
Then, if guidance approaches you from Me,
then, whoever followed My Guidance,
neither will he go astray, nor will he be in despair. (20:123)
And whoever turned aside from My Remembrance,
then, truly, for him is a livelihood of narrowness.
And We will assemble him
on the Day of Resurrection unseeing. (20:124)

COMMENTARY°

Adam's forgetting of his commitment is referred to at the outset. Moreover, the story is given in a chapter that reveals many aspects of God's grace bestowed on those chosen servants whom He places under His care. Therefore, in this story the point is made that God chose Adam, accepted his repentance and provided him with guidance.

God's covenant with Adam and his wife was that they could eat of all the fruits in the Garden except for one tree that represented the prohibition necessary to strengthen willpower, assert one's personality and liberate oneself of the oppressive pressure of desire. All this is necessary to give the human soul the freedom to do without its supposed needs, so that it is not enslaved by desire. This is indeed the true measure of human excellence. Whenever the human will weakens under the pressure of desire, he sinks closer to the level of animals.

Therefore, God so tested the human being initially in order to prepare him for his role of building human life on earth. Thus the test is seen to be part of God's grace that He bestows on the human being in abundance: his power to resist temptation is alerted and enhanced. His eyes are opened to the struggle awaiting him between the pleasures raised before him by Satan and his will to honor his commitment to God. The results of this first test are made public: He forgot it [i.e. his commitment], and We found him lacking in constancy or firmness of purpose. The result is declared before the details of the test have been given.

This episode [of the angels being commanded to prostrate before Adam] of the story is given in very general terms, without the details given in other chapters. The general context here is one of mercy, care and blessings. Therefore, these aspects are brought forth very quickly.

We see how God takes care to alert Adam to the wicked designs employed by his enemy, warning him against Satan's treachery, after he disobeyed God's command to prostrate himself before Adam. The warning is very precise, showing the inevitable result of listening to Satan and his promptings. Once Adam and his wife are thrown out of heaven, all they will have is affliction: hard labor, going astray, worry, indecision, endless waiting, agony, deprivation, etc. As long as they are in Paradise, they are immune to all affliction. All that the human being needs is available in plenty in Paradise, which means that a person should ensure he stays there. We note here how hunger and nakedness are shown to be parallel to thirst and intense heat. These four represent the human being's initial concerns as he tries to find food, clothing, drink and shade.

Adam however was without experience. Moreover, he was burdened by weakness, such as his desire for survival and his other desire to feel himself powerful. It was through these weaknesses that Satan was able to tempt him.

We see here how Satan touches Adam's raw nerve. Human life and power are limited. Therefore, he longs for survival and lasting power. These two desires provided Satan with suitable openings. As we have said, Adam had all human weaknesses planted in him for a definite purpose. Therefore, he forgot his commitment and transgressed the permitted limits.

It appears that what Adam and his wife saw were their genitals, which had thus far been covered. This is the more likely explanation, since they started to cover themselves again, piecing together leaves from the trees in heaven. On the other hand, the expression may mean that their action aroused their sexual desire.

It may be that the tree was forbidden to Adam and his wife because its fruits could awaken their sexual desire. Perhaps it was intended to leave this desire dormant for a time. It could be, on the other hand, that their forgetting of their commitment to God and their disobedience of His orders resulted in a weakening of their willpower and a break of their bond with the Lord Creator, giving way to the emergence of sexual and reproductive desires. It is only in this way that human beings can extend their life beyond their own term. All these are possible explanations for the association between their eating of the forbidden tree and their becoming aware of their nakedness. The Quran does not say, "their shameful parts became visible"; rather, these parts became visible "to them." This suggests that these parts were screened from them and then became exposed through their own inner feelings.

Perhaps the clothing that Satan removed was not physical, but rather, a protective feeling of innocence, purity and closeness to God. These are mere hypotheses that we neither emphasize nor give weight to. We state them only to make the first human experience with temptation clearer.

But God extended His grace to Adam and his wife after he had disobeyed Him. This was only the first experience. Realizing the enormity of his error, Adam and Eve both repented and sought God's forgiveness, but this is not mentioned here in order to leave God's grace to be seen most clearly.

DRAWING THE LINES OF BATTLE

The order was then given to the two combatants to descend to earth, which would be the battleground in this long-lasting war. Thus, the enmity was declared the whole world over. This means that there is no excuse for Adam and his progeny. None can claim to have been taken unawares. Everyone knows the score and the un-abating hostility. The whole universe is aware of it.

Along with this declaration which resounded throughout the heavens and the earth, and which was witnessed by all the angels, God has willed, out of His grace, to send His messengers bringing guidance to humanity, before He punishes them for their sins. Thus, at the same time He alerts His servants to this enmity between Adam and Satan, He announces to them that He will provide them with guidance. He will then give them their reward according to whether they follow His guidance or reject it:

When guidance shall come to you from Me, he who follows My guidance will not go astray, nor will he suffer misery; but he who turns away from My message shall have a straitened lift and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. He will say: Lord, he why have You raised me up blind, while I was endowed with sight? God will reply: Thus it is: Our revelations were brought to you, but you were oblivious to them.

When human life severs its links with God, depriving itself of His abundant grace, it becomes straitened, even though it may be materially affluent. It is a type of stress attendant on being isolated from God and the reassurance of His mercy. It is a stress that demonstrates itself in worry, doubt and confusion; holding tight to what one owns and fearing unexpected loss; coveting all manner of comfort and pleasure; nurturing aspirations and ambitions, etc. People do not feel true reassurance except when they place their trust in God, holding tight to their bond with Him. The reassurance generated by faith in God adds much to life's dimensions in length, breadth, depth and expanse. Without such reassurance, life is nothing but a continuous misery and is far harder than what man suffers through poverty and deprivation. This is the same type of going astray as that which man went through in the life of this world. It comes by way of recompense for his turning away from God's message in this first life.

SATAN'S PRIDE AGAINST THE HUMAN BEING

CHAPTER 17: THE 50TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And mention when We said to the angels:*
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
so they prostrated themselves, but Iblis.
He said: Will I prostrate myself to one
whom Thou hadst created from clay? (17:61)

He said: Hadst Thou considered this whom Thou hadst held in esteem above me? If Thou hadst postponed for me to the Day of Resurrection, I will, certainly, bring under full control his offspring, but a few. (17:62)

He said: Go thou! And whoever of them heeded thee, then, truly, hell will be your recompense, an ample recompense. (17:63)

And hound whom thou wert able to of them with thy voice and rally against them with thy horses and thy foot soldiers and share with them in their wealth and children and promise them. And Satan promises them nothing but delusion. (17:64)

Truly, My servants, over them there is no authority for thee. And thy Lord sufficed as a Trustee. (17:65)

COMMENTARY°

And when We said unto the angels who were on the earth: Fall down prostrate before Adam a prostration of greeting and they fell prostrate all save Iblis, he said: Shall I fall prostrate before that which You have created of clay?

CREATION OF ADAM, THE HUMAN BEING

CHAPTER 15: THE 54TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created the human being*
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:26)
And We created the ones who are spirits before
from the fire of a burning wind. (15:27)
And mention when thy Lord said to the angels:
Truly, I am One Who is Creator of mortals
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:28)
That is when I shaped him and breathed into him of My Spirit.
So fall down before him
as ones who prostrate themselves. (15:29)
The angels prostrated themselves, one and all, (15:30)
but Iblis.
He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves. (15:31)

COMMENTARY°

Here, in [these signs], as we shall see, emphasis is placed on the secret of Adam's creation and the essential factors in the human being's constitution, leading him to follow either divine guidance or Satan's erring ways. Therefore, it begins by stating that Adam is created out of sounding clay and black mud molded into shape, before God breathed of His noble spirit into him. It also states that Satan was created before him, out of the fire of scorching winds. It tells of the angels' prostration before Adam, while Satan refused to so prostrate before a human being created of such low material, and how, as a result, God expelled him from heaven with a curse. God then accepted Satan's request to give him respite until the Day of Judgment. It adds Satan's own admission that he has no power over God's faithful servants. His power is only over those who submit to him in preference to submitting to God. It then states, without detail, the destiny of each of the two parties. The lack of detail here fits with the point of emphasis whereby the two essential factors are the human constitution, and the domain where Satan can influence the human being. At the outset the difference in the two natures is clearly stated. The dry clay which gives off a sound when knocked and which is originally black mud given a specific shape is totally different from the fire described here as scorching, blowing fiercely. We learn later that another element is added to man's nature, namely, the breathing of God's spirit into it. Satan's nature, however, remained that of the fire of scorching winds.

[These signs 15:28-31] start with God's address to the angels. When, where and how He said all this are details that we have no way of knowing. We simply have no clear statement in the Quran that answers these points. Since these details belong to the realm of what lies beyond human perception, we have no way of knowing them. Therefore, any attempt to provide answers is futile. The same applies to the creation of the human being out of a dry clay, molded into shape, and infused with God's spirit.

We may refer to other statements in the Quran concerning this point. We may say on the basis of these statements that the human being and life itself originally come out of the earth's clay. The basic constituents of this clay are found in the physical constitution of the human being and all living organisms. There are several stages between the original clay and the human being's creation, and to these the term, line, refers. That is all that may be said on the basis of the texts we have. Any addition is no more than an overload added to the text, which the Quran does not need.

The Quran explains the human being's distinction in a clear and simple statement: The breath of God's spirit that was blown into the human being that takes the human being from the state of a humble organic entity to the noble human stage, right from his inception. It makes of him a distinguished creature worthy of being vicegerent on earth. How does this happen? In answer we ask: when was this human creature able to perceive how the Creator works?

Now we can stand on solid ground. Satan was created out of the fire of scorching wind, long before the human being's creation. This is as far as our knowledge goes. What Satan's nature is and how he was created are matters that we cannot delve into. However, we do understand that he shares some characteristics with the fire of scorching wind. We realize that he can affect the elements constituting mud and clay, since he is made out of fire. He also causes harm and is not slow to inflict it, since the fire he is made of is that of scorching wind. Then the story reveals to us his conceit, anger and arrogance, which is not far removed in our perception from the nature of fire.

Then human creation took place, starting with the sticky mud that had dried, then the adding of sublime spirit that brought about his distinction from all living creatures. This gave him his unique human characteristics. Right from the beginning of human life, the human being has followed his own separate line, while animals remained in their own domain.

THE HUMAN BEING'S DUAL NATURE

It is this breath of God's spirit that provides the human being's link with the Supreme Society, making him worthy of contact with God, receiving His messages, and going beyond the material world of his physical constitution to the mental world of hearts and minds. It is this breath of God's spirit which allows the human being to go beyond time and space, and beyond the reach of his senses and physical ability to formulate perceptions and experience feelings that, at times, seem unlimited.

All this despite the heavy nature of clay which puts him in need of all that his clay constitution requires, such as food, drink, clothing and the satisfaction of desires. He also has his weaknesses, giving rise to faulty concepts and whims. Yet right from the beginning, the human being is a compound of these two inseparable elements. He has the nature of a compound, not that of a mixture. We need to keep this fact clear in our minds whenever we speak about human constitution from clay and sublime spirit. The two constituents are inseparable in his nature. In no situation does either element achieve total domination, completely excluding the other. The human being is not pure clay or pure spirit even for a single moment. Every single action and every single deed involves his whole make-up which is indivisible.

Achieving a proper balance between the clay and the sublime elements is the highest level the human being is called on to achieve. That is the stage of human perfection. He is not required to shed either element of his constitution so as to become either angel or animal. To attempt a rise that disturbs the balance is a shortcoming that does not suit a person's essential characteristics, or the purpose of his creation in this unique fashion. A person who tries to suppress his basic physical instincts is the same as one who tries to suppress his free spiritual powers. Both go beyond straight human nature, imposing on themselves something that God does not sanction. Both destroy themselves by distorting the basic compound of their very nature. They will have to account to God for such destruction.

Islam has formulated its own laws for human life taking into account the human being's constitution. It established a human system that does not suppress a single aspect of human potential. The whole purpose of this system is to establish a perfect balance between these powers, so that they all work in concert, without allowing anyone of them to encroach on another. Any such encroachment leads to the negation of the other, and every dominance leads to destruction. The human being is responsible for the maintenance of the essential characteristics of his nature and his accountability to God. The system submission to God (*islam*) establishes for human life is geared to promote these characteristics which God has given to the human being for a clear purpose.

Anyone who wishes to kill the animal instincts in himself or herself destroys his or her unique constitution, just like one who wishes to kill the essentially human instincts such as faith and believing in what lies beyond the reach of our perception. Anyone who deprives people of their faith destroys their human entity, just like one who deprives them of their food, drink and other physical needs. Both are enemies of the human being, and both deserve to be driven away just like we must drive Satan away.

The human being is an animal with something extra. He has the same needs as an animal, but he has other needs on account of that extra element. These latter needs are not inferior to the 'essential needs' as claimed by advocates of materialistic creeds who are, in truth, enemies of humanity.

These are simply thoughts derived from the truth of our human constitution, as stated in the Quran. We have referred to them only briefly so that we do not delay any further the discussion of the Quranic text relating the most important story of human creation.

THE ENCOUNTER AND THE FALL

God told the angels that He was creating a vicegerent. And what God said immediately took effect, for His word expresses His will, and His will is always done. We cannot question how the breath of God's eternal spirit mixed with the clay that has limited life. Such arguments are no more than idle play. It is indeed a child's play with the human intellect itself. It forces the human mind out of its own realm in which it may exercise its powers of perception, reflection and comprehension. All the controversy that has been raised over this issue, past and present, betrays ignorance of the nature of the human mind, its characteristics and limitations. It simply forces the human mind to try to measure God's work by human standards. It is an altogether wrong premise.

God simply says that this has happened without saying how. Therefore, the event itself is a fact that the human mind cannot deny. Yet it cannot prove it by any interpretation it invents, other than accepting what God has said. The human being is a creature with a beginning, and as such, he cannot judge what is eternal, or how the eternal creates. When the human mind accepts this point, it stops expending its power in futile argument.

What happened after God issued His order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam? That is in the nature of this aspect of God's creation, the angels. They obey God's orders whatever they are, without argument or delay. However, something else also took place at the same time: Iblis refused.

AGAIN, THE ANGELS TOLD TO PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE ADAM

CHAPTER 18: THE 69TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And mention when We said to the angels:*
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
So they prostrated themselves but Iblis.
He had been among the jinn
and he disobeyed the command of His Lord.
Will you, then, take him to yourselves
and his offspring to be protectors other than Me
while they are an enemy to you? Miserable was it to give in place
ones who are unjust! (18:50)

TELL THE ANGELS ALL OF THE NAMES

CHAPTER 2: THE 87TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *And He taught Adam the names, all of them.*
Again, He presented them to the angels and said:
Communicate to Me the names of these
if you had been ones who are sincere. (2:31)
They said: Glory be to **You!**
We have no knowledge but what **You** *had taught us.*
Truly, **You, You** *alone are The Knowing, The Wise.* (2:32)
He said: O Adam! Communicate to them their names.
So then, when he communicated to them their names,
He said: Did I not say to you:
Truly, I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth
and I know what you show
and what you had been keeping back. (2:33)
And mention when We said to the angels:
Prostrate yourselves to Adam!
They, then, prostrated themselves but Iblis.
He refused and grew arrogant.

He had been among the ones who are ungrateful. (2:34)
And We said: O Adam! Inhabit the Garden, you and your spouse:
Eat freely from it both of you wherever you both willed,
but come not near this, the tree
or you both will be among the ones who are unjust. (2:35)
Then, Satan caused both of them to slide back from there
and drove both of them out from that in which they both had been.
And We said: Get down some of you as an enemy to some other.
And for you on the earth, a time appointed
and sustenance for a while. (2:36)
Adam, then, received words from his Lord for He turned to him
in forgiveness. Truly, He, He is
The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate. (2:37)
We said: Get down altogether from it. And whenever guidance
approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (2:38)

COMMENTARY°

The passage takes us right into the very scene in which we can see the angels in God's presence, and witness how He entrusts the human being with the task of God's vicegerent on earth. He has given the human being the great secret of knowledge and cognition, as well as the ability to assign names to persons and objects that serve as symbols denoting whatever they are assigned to, even though they are no more than sounds and words. The ability to know and name objects has had the most profound effect on human life on earth. We can only imagine what life would have been like without this communication tool to appreciate its value. Indeed, without it, human life and interaction would have been unthinkable, and there would have been no progress beyond a very primitive state. Without such ability, all communication would have necessitated the presence of the subject matter. Thus, if a group wants to discuss something related to a tree, a mountain, or a particular person, then that person should be brought before the group, or they should all go to the tree or mountain. Indeed, without the ability to use names and symbols, human life could not function. (2:31-32)

The angels have no use for such an ability because it is not required for their role. Therefore, they have not been given it. When God, having bestowed this great honor on Adam, asked the angels to identify certain objects, they could not because they did not possess the ability to use symbols and assign names or titles to things.

They admitted their inability and recognized the limits of their knowledge, prompting the comment that followed. (2:33)

This is undoubtedly the highest accolade bestowed upon the human being. For, despite the fact that he would commit corruption on earth and shed blood, he was elevated above the angels, endowed with the secrets of knowledge, and given a free and independent will to choose his destiny. The human being's dual nature, his ability to determine his own course of action, and the trust he carries to pursue God's guidance by his own means are all aspects of the high esteem in which he is held. The angels prostrated themselves before Adam in obedience to God's command, Here we see evil manifested in Satan's behavior as he disobeys God Almighty, vainly refuses to recognize honor where it is due, persists in his error and closes his mind to the truth.

The general drift of the narration suggests that Iblis was not one of the angels; rather, he was with them. For, had he been an angel, he would not have disobeyed God, since the angels' foremost characteristic is that they: do not disobey God in whatever He commands them and always do what they are bidden. (66:6) The fact that the Arabic construction here makes an exception in relation to Iblis does not mean that he is, or was, one of the angels. The exception is justified on the basis that he was with the angels. This is perfectly acceptable in Arabic, which allows the construction "the whole clan arrived but not Ahmad" without implying that Ahmad is a member of the clan.

Furthermore, the Quran specifically identifies Iblis as belonging to another type of extra-terrestrial creatures, the jinn, who are created out of fire, eliminating the idea that he was, at any time, an angel. (See 15: 27, 18:50, and 55:15)

The battle lines are drawn, and the long struggle commences between Iblis, the epitome of evil, and the human being, God's vicegerent on earth. This battle is fought within the human being's own conscience. Its outcome will be in human favor as long as he exercises his will and remains faithful to his covenant with God. Evil will triumph only if the human being succumbs to his own desires and alienates himself from his Lord. (2:34)

They had been allowed access to all the fruits of Paradise with the exception of one tree. That tree may be seen as a symbol of the things forbidden to human beings on earth, without which there would be no freewill for him to exercise. Human beings would have been indistinguishable from animals, acting on mere instinct. Without forbidden things, there would be no way of testing human willpower and resolve in fulfilling his covenant with God. The human will is the deciding factor, and those who do not exercise their will, despite their human form, belong with animals and irrational creatures. (2:35)

So graphic and expressive is the Arabic word used here to express the act of luring away. We almost visualize the scene of Adam and Eve being tempted and manuvred so that they slip and fall out of Paradise.

Thus the test is over. Adam forgot his covenant and yielded to temptation, invoking God's inevitable judgment that they should be sent down to earth. (2:36) This was the signal for the battle between the human being and Satan to commence and continue until the end of time. (2:36)

But Adam, by virtue of his basically good and sound human nature, was awakened to his oversight and was saved by God's boundless mercy, which is always close at hand for the repentant to seek. (2:37)

God's final word has been spoken, and His full covenant with Adam and his offspring as His vicegerents on earth has been sealed and brought into effect. This covenant outlines the conditions that bring humanity prosperity and those that lead people to ruin. (2:38)

Thus the battlefield was transferred to its proper location, the planet earth, and the battle was to rage on unabated. From that early moment the human being was taught how to triumph over evil, and what would bring about his defeat and condemnation. It is now for him to choose how to act.

GOD FAVORED ADAM

CHAPTER 3: THE 89TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *Truly, God favored Adam and Noah*
and the people of Abraham
and the people of Imran above all the worlds.... (3:33)

COMMENTARY°

Lo! God preferred, He has chosen, Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of Imran, meaning He preferred them above the worlds, by making prophethood reside in them and their progeny.

THE PARABLE OF ADAM IS LIKE THE PARABLE OF JESUS

Madinah: *Truly the parable of Jesus with God*
is like the parable of Adam.

He created him from earth dust.
Again, He said to him: Be! Then, he is! (3:59)

COMMENTARY°

God then explained the creation of Jesus without a father because the delegation of Najran asked the Prophet to provide proof from the Quran for his saying that Jesus was not the son of God, so God revealed this verse.

CHILDREN OF ADAM

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPTER REVEALED

O Children of Adam!
Surely, We caused to descend to you garments
to cover up your intimate parts and finery,
but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better.
That is of the signs of God so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26)
O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you
as he drove your parents out of the Garden,
tearing off their garments from both of them
to cause them to see their intimate parts.
Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not.
Truly, We made he and the satans protectors
of those who believe not. (7:27)

*****

O Children of Adam! If Messengers from among you
approach relating My signs to you,
then, whoever was God-conscious and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (7:33)

*****

And mention when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam—
from their generative organs—
their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves:
Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness
so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection:
Truly, we had been ones who were heedless of this. (7:172)

CHAPTER 36: THE 41ST CHAPTER REVEALED

Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam,
that you not worship Satan?
Truly, he is a clear enemy. (36:30

CHAPTER 17: THE 59TH CHAPTER REVEALED

And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem.
And We carried them on dry land and on the sea
and provided them with what is good.
And We gave them advantage over many
of whomever We created with excellence. (17:70)

Cain and Abel

Chapter 5: The 112th Chapter Revealed

Madinah: *And recount you to them the tiding of the two sons of Adam in Truth \when they both brought near a sacrifice and it was received from one of them but there is non-acceptance from the other. He said: I will, surely, kill you. He said: Truly, God receives only from the ones who are God-conscious.* (5:27)
If you were to extend your hand against me so that you would kill me, I would not be one who stretches out my hand towards you so that I kill you. I fear God, Lord of the worlds. (5:28)
Truly, I want that you wilt draw the burden of my sin and your sin, then, to be among the Companions of the Fire.
That is the recompense of the ones who are unjust. (5:29)
Then, his soul prompted him to kill his brother.
And he killed him and became
among the ones who are losers. (5:30)
Then, God raised up a raven to scratch the earth,
to cause him to see how to cover up
the naked corpse of his brother.
He says: Woe to me! Was I unable to be like this raven
to cover up the naked corpse of my brother?
Then, he became among the ones who were remorseful. (5:31)
On account of that, We prescribed for the Children of Jacob
that whoever killed a person, other than in retribution
for another person, or because of corruption in and on the earth,
it will be as if he had killed all of humanity.
And whoever gave life to one,
it will be as if he gave life to all of humanity.
And, certainly, our Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents.
Again, truly, many of them after that
were ones who were excessive in and on the earth. (5:32)

Commentary°

Having related to his followers an account of certain events in the history of the Children of Jacob with their Prophet, Moses, the Prophet Muhammad is told by God to relate the story of two people representing two types of human being. The account should be given in all honesty, because it tells of the truth deeply entrenched in human nature. It also emphasizes the need for a deterrent legal code to ensure justice.

Adam's two sons were in a situation that gives no rise to any thought of aggression in a good person's mind. The situation is one of obedience to God and offering a sacrifice to draw closer to God. We note that the passive mode is used here to indicate that the acceptance or rejection of the offered sacrifice is done by a higher power in a metaphysical way. This mode of expression suggests to us two points: the first is that we should not try to determine how exactly the offering was accepted. We need not discuss reports mentioned in books of commentary on the Quran because these reports are most probably derived from Old Testament fables.

The second point suggests that the one whose offering was accepted had not committed any crime that might cause anyone else to be angry with him to any extent, let alone that that person should plot a murder. He had no say in the acceptance of this offering. The nature of the One who accepted the offering was beyond the perception of either of the two brothers. Therefore, thoughts of anger or murder should have been far removed from the minds of both brothers. They were in a situation that is close to worship, since it involves offering a sacrifice for God's sake.

The latter declaring that he will kill the other is a statement of confirmed intention which is met by our disapproval because it is totally unjustified. Indeed, it could only be the result of blind envy that is alien to a good heart. Thus, from the very first moment, we take an attitude of total disapproval of aggression. The sign, however, greatly enhances the ghastliness of this act of aggression by showing the peaceful, good-natured attitude of the other brother when God says that God only receives from the God-conscious.

ENOCH (IDRIS)

We are told in a commentary that Enoch was Noah's great-grandfather. Indeed he was a truthful one, a prophet.

CHAPTER 19: THE 44TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And remember Enoch in the Book.*
Truly, he had been a just person, a Prophet. (19:56)
And We exalted him to a lofty place. (19:57)

COMMENTARY°

The last prophet to be mentioned in this chapter is Enoch (Idris): And mention in the Book Enoch, who was a man of truth, a prophet. We raised him to a lofty station." (19: 56-57) We have no way of determining during which period of history Enoch lived. Most probably he was ahead of Abraham. He was not one of the Jewish prophets. There is no mention of him in the Jewish books. The Quran describes him as a man of truth and a prophet. It records the fact that God granted him honor and made him worthy of praise, elevating him to a lofty position.

There is a view we would like to mention here without suggesting whether it is true or false. Some Egyptologists suggest that Idris is an Arabicized form of Osiris in the same way as Yohanna is Arabicized as Yahya, and Elisha as Al-Yasa. We know that around Osiris many a legend has been woven. It is said that old Egyptians believed that he was elevated to heaven where he was established on a throne. Whoever, after death, is found to have to his credit more good deeds in this life than bad ones will join Osiris who has become an Egyptian deity. He is also said to have taught the Egyptians all that they knew before he was elevated to heaven.

Be that as it may, we confine ourselves to what the Quran states about Enoch without indulging in speculation. We only say that it is more probable that he lived before the time of Abraham.

CHAPTER 21: THE 73RD CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Ezekiel* (Dhul-Kifl),
all were of the ones who remain steadfast. (21:85)
And We caused them to enter into Our mercy.
They are the ones in accord with morality. (21:86)

ELISHA (AL-YASA)

CHAPTER 38: THE 38TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael, Elisha* (al-Yasa), *and Ezekiel*

(Dhu-l Kifl) *And all are among the good.* (38:48)

CHAPTER 6: THE 55TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elias* (Iliyas).
All were of hte ones who were in accord with morality. (6:85)
And Ishmael and Elisha (al-Yasa) *and Jonah and Lot.*
We gave all an advantage over the worlds (6:86)
and from among their fathers
and their offspring and their brothers.
We elected them and We guided them to a straight path. (6:87)

EZEKIEL (DHUL KIFL)

CHAPTER 38: THE 38TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Ezekiel* (Dhu-l Kifl).
And all are among the good. (38:48)

CHAPTER 21: THE 73RD CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Ezekiel* (Dhul-Kifl),
all were of the ones who remain steadfast. (21:85)
And We caused them to enter into Our mercy.
They are the ones in accord with morality. (21:86)

NOAH

NOAH'S FOLK WERE DEFIANT

CHAPTER 53: THE 23RD CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *... and the folk of Noah before.*
Truly, they had been they who do greater wrong
and ones who are defiant. (53:52)

THE FOLK OF NOAH DENIED WHAT CAME BEFORE THEM

CHAPTER 50: THE 34TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah *The folk of Noah denied what came before them,*
and the Companions of the Rass and Thamud ... (50:12)

COMMENTARY°

A GLANCE AT HISTORY

The chapter (50) now opens some pages of the book of human history, speaking of the fate of past communities who argued about resurrection in the same way as did the Arab unbelievers, and who similarly denied God's messages. As a result, they incurred God's inevitable punishment: (50:12-15)

Al-Rass signifies a well over which there is no built wall, and the dales signifies an area thick with trees. The people of the wooded dales most probably refer to Shuayb's people.

The purpose of this quick reference to these peoples is certainly not to give any detailed information about them. It is only a reminder of the fate of earlier ungrateful communities. What is worth noting is that the sign mentions that each denied God's messengers in the plural. This emphasizes the unity of the divine message as all messengers preached the same faith. Thus, whoever denies anyone of Gods messengers actually denies them all, because he rejects the same message delivered by them all. God's messengers are brothers forming one community. They are like a tree with roots stretching far back into time. Each branch of that tree projects all its essential qualities, giving an image of the whole. Therefore, whoever cuts a branch actually cuts the tree and all its branches. Therefore, God's warnings came true and those communities suffered the fates known to listeners.

THE FOLK OF NOAH DENY NOAH

CHAPTER 54: THE 37TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied before them.*

They denied Our servant and said:
One who is possessed! And he was deterred. (54:9)
So he called to his Lord saying: I am one who is vanquished,
so You help me. (54:10)
So We opened the doors of heaven with torrential water. (54:11)
And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs
so the waters were to meet one another
from a command that was measured. (54:12)
And We carried him on a vessel of planks and caulked, (54:13)
running under Our eyes, a recompense
for Noah who had been disbelieved. (54:14)
And, certainly, We left this as a sign.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:15)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:16)

COMMENTARY°

[These verses] use the description of what happened to the people of Noah inviting hearts to reflect after they have been shown one of the calamities that befell earlier deniers of the truth.

THE FOLK OF NOAH DENIED WHAT CAME BEFORE THEM

CHAPTER 38: THE 38TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *The folk of Noah before them denied* ... (38:12)

COMMENTARY°

Noah tells his people that if they are completely fed up with him, unable to tolerate his presence among them and his reminders of their duty to believe in God, then let that be as it may. He will continue along his way, unperturbed by their opposition, for "in God have I placed my trust." He seeks no help from anyone else.

It is a clear challenge thrown out by one who is absolutely certain of his ground and power. In fact he is inviting his opponents to attack him. What were the forces at his command facilitating such a challenge? He simply had faith, which gave him a power that is superior to everything else. Numbers, careful planning and firepower are of little use when compared to faith. He had God's support, and God does not abandon those who believe in Him. It is the challenge of one who relies on the source of real power, for faith establishes a bond between the believer and the One who has power over everything in the universe. It is neither an arrogant nor a foolhardy challenge. Rather, it is the challenge of true power.

Advocates of the divine faith have in God's Messengers a fine example to follow. They should have unwavering confidence as they place their trust in God and face tyranny, whatever its source may be. Tyranny will not cause them any real or lasting damage, apart from perhaps some physical pain that God allows as a test of the believers. God does not abandon the believers to His and their enemies, but He lets them undergo this test so that true believers come through it unharmed. The end favors the believers when God's promise is fulfilled and they are victorious.

The Quranic signs show that Noah exhibited intellectual humility and suspended judgment of the people. It is based on the recognition that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness. It implies a lack of arrogance or conceit. It implies insight into the foundations of one's beliefs: knowing what evidence one has and how one has come to believe.

THE MESSAGE OF THE MESSENGER NOAH

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *Surely, We sent Noah to his folk.*
And he said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no god other than He. Truly, I fear for you
the punishment of a tremendous Day. (7:59)
The Council of his folk said: Truly, we see you
clearly wandering astray. (7:60)
He said: O my folk! There is no fallacy in me.
I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds. (7:61)
I state the messages of my Lord to you
and advise you and I know from God what you know not. (7:62)
Or marveled you that there drew near you
a remembrance from your Lord through a man among you
that he warn you and that you be God-conscious
so that perhaps you will find mercy? (7:63)
Then, they denied him.
Then, We rescued him and those who were with him
on the boat and We drowned those who denied Our signs.
Truly, they, they had been a folk in the dark. (7:64)

COMMENTARY°

This is the solid unchangeable basis of divine faith, the mainstay of human life that guarantees the unity of direction and goal. It ensures that human beings are free from enslavement by their desires or by other human beings. It helps those who accept it to rise above all that they desire and to resist all temptation and threats. (7:59)

The divine faith is a code for living based on the fundamental principle that all authority in human life belongs to God alone. This is the essential meaning of worshipping God alone and that God is the only deity acknowledged by human beings. (7:60)

Noah denies that he is in error, and explains to his people the true nature of his call and its origin. He has not invented it, but he is simply a messenger bearing a message from the Lord of humanity, and delivering it with honest advice, based on the fact that he knows of God what they do not know. He feels that knowledge within himself, because he has his link with God. (7:61)

Here we note a gap in the story. It seems that they have wondered that God should choose a human being, one of their number, to bear a message from Him to them, and that this human messenger should find within himself knowledge about his Lord which is not available to those who are not similarly chosen. This gap is indicated by what comes next. (7:63)

There is nothing strange about this choice. Indeed, everything about human beings is amazing. The human being deals with all the worlds and can have a direct link with his Lord because of what God has imparted to him and settled in his nature as a result of breathing into him of His Spirit. God certainly knows best whom to choose as His messenger. If God chooses a human being to bear His message, then this honored person can receive the message through his latent ability to be in contact with God who gives him his special status as a human being receiving honors no other creature receives.

Noah reveals to them the goal of his message. (7:63) There is first the warning so that their hearts respond and steer away from evil, as a prelude to eventually receiving God's grace. Noah himself has no personal interest or purpose other than this noble one.

THE FOLK OF NOAH DENY NOAH

CHAPTER 25: THE 42ND CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And the folk of Noah*
when they denied the Messengers,
We drowned them.
And We made them as a sign for humanity.
And We made ready for the ones who are unjust
a painful punishment. ... (25:37)

COMMENTARY°

It should be explained here that Noah's people denied only

Noah's message and their rejection applied only to him, but we have to remember that Noah only preached the faith advocated by all God's messengers. Therefore, when they rejected what he told them, it was as though they rejected all messengers, most of whom lived after their own time. God states that He made them an example for humanity. (25:37) The great floods could not be forgotten despite the passage of time. Anyone who looks carefully at the result of that flood will understand its lesson, provided he approaches it with an open mind. It is now ready, requiring no further waiting.

THOSE WHO BELIEVED ARE SAVED AND THE UNGRATEFUL DROWN

CHAPTER 26: THE 47TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied*
the ones who are sent (26:105)
when their brother, Noah, said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:106)
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you (26:107)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:108)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:109)
So be God-conscious and obey you me. (26:110)
They (the folk of Noah) said: Will we believe in you
when it is the most wretched that followed you? (26:111)
He said: And what knowledge
have I of what they had been doing? (26:112)
Truly, their reckoning is but
with my Lord if you be aware. (26:113)
I am not one who drives away the ones who believe. (26:114)
I am not but a clear warner. (26:115)
They said: If thou hast not refrained thyself, O Noah,
thou wilt, certainly, be among the ones who are stoned! (26:116)
He said: My Lord! My folk denied me, (26:117)
so give You deliverance between me and them and victory
and deliver me and whoever is
with me among the ones who believe. (26:118)
And We rescued him and whoever was with him
in the laden boat. (26:119)
Again, We drowned after that the ones who remained. (26:120)
In this is, truly, a sign, yet most of them
had not been ones who believe. (26:121)
Your Lord, He, truly, is

The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:122)

COMMENTARY°

Such was Noah's message that his people denied, despite his being their brother. Such brotherhood should have ensured a peaceful relationship, leading to their belief in him and his message. But his people had no time for this bond of brotherhood, and they did not soften to their brother's call when he said to them. (26:106) Will you not worry about the end to which your attitudes and actions lead you?

This directive and reminder to fear God is consistent in these signs. Then every prophet that succeeded Noah said the same thing to his community. (26:107) He would not cheat, defraud or act dishonestly. He would not add to, or withhold anything from what he was required to deliver to his people. (26:108) In this case, Noah again reminds his people to fear God, giving it a more express definition this time. He appeals to their consciences to obey him as he calls on them to surrender themselves to God.

He then reassures them that he was neither looking for any worldly gain nor seeking any wage in return for advocating the divine message and guiding them to their Lord. He seeks only God's reward, because it was He who gave him his message. This assurance of seeking no gain or wage seems to have always been necessary for sincere advocacy of faith. It is, thus, distinguished from the familiar pattern of religion as exploited by clerics and religious orders for personal gain and enrichment.

Now that he has reassured them of having no personal ambition, Noah again tells them to be conscious of God, reminding them that they should obey him. (26:110) Their response, a singular objection, was the same given to all messengers. (26:111)

What they meant was that it was only the poor who followed him, because the poor are normally the first to accept divine messages and messengers. They are quick to believe in God and submit themselves to Him, because they are not deterred by any hollow status or fear of losing any interest or position as a result. The chiefs and nobles of society often fear for their interests that are based on false considerations, as also myths and legends that are given religious status. Moreover, they are unwilling to accept complete equality with the masses as a result of believing in God's oneness. Under such a belief system only faith and good action are given an appropriately high value, with the net result that some people rise and others fall by the single standard of faith that is complemented by good action.

Noah's reply, therefore, establishes true values, defining the mission of God's messenger and leaves judgment on people to God who knows best their intentions, thoughts and actions:

Said he: What knowledge do I have as to what they used to do in the past? Their reckoning rests with none other than my Lord, if you could but understand. I am not one to drive away the believers. I am only a plain warner. (26:112-26:115)

The nobility always speak in a derogative manner about the poor. They say that their habits and values are not acceptable to those who are in the higher echelons of society. They have nothing of their refinements. Noah tells them that he does not ask of people anything other than that they believe in God. Their actions are left to God to evaluate and to determine their appropriate reward. His, God's, is the right evaluation. Noah then defines his own mission. (26:115)

With such clear argument and plain logic, Noah's people were silenced. They had no meaningful reply to offer. Therefore, they resorted to the same method to which tyranny resorts every time it finds itself cornered; they threatened him with brute force. (26:116) Thus tyranny reveals its ghastly and cruel face.

Noah realized that their hardened hearts would not soften. Therefore, he turned to the One source of support that is always available to believers, never failing them: (26:117-26:118) His Lord certainly knew that his people had denied him and accused him of lying, but Noah needed to address his complaint to God, appealing to Him for justice. Thus, he puts the matter in His hands. (26:118) Such decisive judgment will put an end to tyranny and injustice. (26:118)

God certainly responded to His messenger's plea for help. (26:119-26:120) Thus, the end of this very early battle in human history between faith and unfaith is described in a very quick sequence of words, which also tell of the outcome of every subsequent battle between the two sides in human history.

NOAH A GRATEFUL SERVANT

CHAPTER 17: THE 50TH CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *O offspring of whomever We carried with Noah: Truly, he had been a grateful servant.* (17:3)

GENERATIONS AFTER NOAH PERISH

Makkah: *How many generations
have We caused to perish after Noah?
And thy Lord sufficed as Aware,
Seeing the impieties of His servants.* (17:17)

THE MESSAGES OF NOAH REFERRED TO

CHAPTER 10: THE 51ST CHAPER REVEALED

Makkah: *And recount to them the tidings of Noah*
when he said to his folk:
O my folk! If my station had been troublesome to you
and my reminding you of the signs of God,
then, in God I put my trust.
So summon up your affair along with your ascribed associates.
Again, there be no cause for doubt in your affair.
Again, decide against me and give me no respite. (10:71)
Then, if you turned away, I asked you not for any compensation.
My compensation is with God.
And I was commanded
that I be of the ones who submit to God. (10:72)
Then, they denied him, so We delivered him
and some with him on the boat.
And we made them the viceregents
while We drowned those who denied Our signs.
Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are warned! (10:73)
Again, We raised up Messengers after him to their folk.
They drew near them with the clear portents.
But they had not been believing
in what they had denied before of it.
Thus, We set a seal on the hearts
of the ones who exceed the limits. (10:74)

COMMENTARY°

Only the end part of Noah's story is mentioned here where we see him offering his people a final challenge. He had spent a very long time preaching and warning his people, but to no avail. There is no mention of the ark here, or of those who were taken on board and so saved from the great floods. The aim here is to highlight the challenge and the believers' reliance on God, as well as the saving of a small, powerless group of believers and the destruction of the great hordes of the ungrateful. These signs reduce the whole story to a single episode so as to emphasize its final end. This is what is most fitting in the present context.

Noah tells his people that if they are completely fed up with him, unable to tolerate his presence among them and his reminders of their duty to believe in God, then let that be as it may. He will continue along his way, unperturbed by their opposition, for "in God have I placed my trust." He seeks no help from anyone else.

Noah Builds an Ark and His Son is Drowned

Chapter 11: The 52nd Chaper Revealed

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk:*
Truly, I am a clear warner to you (11:25)
that you worship none but God.
Truly, I fear for you the punishment of a painful Day. (11:26)
Then, the Council of those who were ungrateful
said from among his folk:
We see you only as a mortal like us.
We see none followed you but those,
they who are visibly our most wretched, simple minded.
Nor we see you as having any merit above us.
Nay! We think that you are ones who lie. (11:27)
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had been
with a clear portent from my Lord
and that He gave me mercy from Himself
but it was invisible to you?
Then, will we fasten you to it
when you are ones who dislike it? (11:28)
And O my folk! I ask not of you wealth for it.
My compensation is but with God.
And I will not be one who drives away those who believed.
Truly, they are ones who will encounter their Lord
while I see you a folk who are ignorant. (11:29)
And O my folk! Who would help me against God
if I drove them away?
Will you not, then, recollect? (11:30)
And I say not to you: The treasures of God are with me
nor that I know the unseen nor I say:
Truly, I am an angel nor I say
of those whom your eyes look down upon:
God will never give them good.
God is greater in knowledge of what is within their souls for,
then, I would be of the ones who are unjust. (11:31)
They said: O Noah! Surely, you had disputed with us,
then, made much of the dispute with us.
Now approach us with what you have promised us
if you had been among the ones who are sincere. (11:32)
He said: Only God will bring it on you if He willed.
And you will not be ones who frustrate Him. (11:33)

And my advice will not profit you
—even if I wanted to advise you—
if God had been wanting to lead you into error.
He is your Lord and to Him you will return. (11:34)
Or they say: He devised it.
Say: If I devised it, my sin is upon me
and I am free of your sins. (11:35)
And it was revealed to Noah:
Truly, none of thy folk will believe but who had already believed.
So be you not despondent
at what they have been accomplishing. (11:36)
And craft you the boat under Our Eyes and by Our Revelation
and address Me not for those who did wrong.
They are, truly, ones who are drowned. (11:37)
And he crafts the boat.
Whenever the Council passed by him of his folk,
they derided him.
He said: If you deride us, then, we will deride you
just as you deride us. (11:38)
And you will know to whom will approach a punishment
covering with shame and on whom
an abiding punishment will alight! (11:39)
Until when Our command drew near and the oven boiled,
We said: Carry in it of every living thing,
two, a pair and thy people,
but him against whom the saying has preceded and who believed.
And none but a few believed with him. (11:40)
And he said: Embark in it. In the Name of God
will be the course of the ship and its berthing.
Truly, my Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate. (11:41)
So it runs with them amidst waves like mountains.
And Noah cried out to his son and he had been standing apart:
O my son! Embark with us and be you not
with the ones who are ungrateful! (11:42)
He said: I will take shelter for myself on a mountain.
It will be what saves me from the harm of the water.
Noah said: No one saves from the harm this day
from the command of God but him on whom He had mercy.
And a wave came between them
so he had been of the ones who are drowned. (11:43)
And it was said: O earth! Take in thy water!
And O heaven: Desist!

And the water was shrunken and the command of God
was satisfied and it was on the same level as Al-Judi.
And it was said: Away with the folk,
the ones who are unjust! (11:44)
And Noah cried out to his Lord and said:
My Lord! Truly, my son is of my people.
And, truly, Your promise is The Truth.
And You are the Most Just of the ones who judge. (11:45)
He said: O Noah! Truly, he is not of your people.
Truly, he, his actions are not in accord with morality.
So ask not of Me what you have no knowledge.
Truly, I admonish you so that you not be
of the ones who are ignorant. (11:46)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I take refuge with You so that I not ask
You of what I am without knowledge.
Unless You are to forgive me and have mercy on me,
I would be of the ones who are losers. (11:47)
It was said: O Noah! Get you down with peace from Us
and blessings on you and on communities
from whoever are with you,
and communities to whom We will give enjoyment.
And, again, they will be afflicted by Us
with a painful punishment. (11:48)
That is of the tidings of the unseen that We reveal to you.
You have not been knowing of them
nor your folk before this. So have you patience.
Truly, the Ultimate End is
for the ones who are Godfearing. (11:49)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran gives this account of the history of the age-old call to submission to the Will of god in order to provide landmarks for its advocates . These landmarks are not only relevant to the first Muslim community, the first to be addressed by the Quran, and the first to make it its operational guide as opposed to ignorance, but also to every Muslim community which stands up to ignorance anywhere in the world, at any time. This is what makes the Quran the permanent constitution of its message and the manual of every Quranic-based movement.

Every time the Quran mentions the approach of any messenger sent by God to any people, it quotes the messenger as saying: 'My people, worship God alone. You have no god other than He." 'Worship God alone' means total submission to Him alone in all matters which relate to this life or to the hereafter. This is indeed the original meaning of the word. The dictionary shows the word *abada*, which we now use primarily to denote worship, as meaning: to yield, submit and to lower one's rank to another. A *muabbad* road is one which has been leveled to facilitate travelling. *Abbada* is to enslave; that is, to cause someone to submit to another.

The Arabs who were first addressed by the Quran did not confine the import of the term abada to mere worship rituals. Indeed, when the Arabs were first addressed by this term in Makkah, no worship rituals had then been assigned to them. They understood it to mean that they were required to submit themselves to God alone in all their life affairs and to renounce submission to anyone else. The Prophet defined 'worship' in one of his pronouncements as meaning 'compliance', not as offering worship rituals.

The term 'worship' has come to signify worship rituals since these are one form of showing submission to God. This form does not by any means, however, encompass the full meaning of 'worship'. When the clear meanings of 'religion' and 'worship' faded from peoples' minds, they started to think that people abandon Islam only if they offer worship rituals to anyone other than God, such as idols and statues. They believe that if they avoid this particular form of ignorance they are protected against atheism, polytheism or any other form of ignorance generally and remain Muslims who could not be deprived of this status. They would thus continue to enjoy all the privileges of a Muslim with regard to the protection of life, honor and property.

This is a blatant fallacy based on distortions of the word 'worship' which decides whether a person is Muslim or not. This term signifies total submission to God in all matters and all affairs. As we have already said, this is the linguistic meaning of the word and the specific definition of it by the Prophet. When the Prophet has so clearly defined a certain term, no one can provide any other definition.

He certainly did not mean to tell his people not to offer worship rituals to anyone other than God, as imagined by those who give the term 'worship' the very narrow meaning of rituals. He meant total submission to God alone and the rejection of any false god or tyrant.

Their denial of God's revelations is manifest in their disobedience of His messengers and their following of arrogant tyrants. All these actions refer to the same thing. When any people disobey God's commands, they do indeed deny God's revelations and disobey His messengers. They thus go beyond the pale of Islam into polytheism. We have already shown that Islam, in its broad sense, is the original status with which human life on earth started. It is indeed the faith brought by Adam when he fell from heaven and was put in charge of this earth. It is the faith Noah re- established on earth as he disembarked after the floods. People, however, will continue to deviate from Islam and sink back into ignorance until the call of Islam is successful in bringing them back to Islam. The cycle has continued until the present time.

The establishment of the oneness of God, the only God, Lord and Sustainer in the universe, and the only source of legislation in all matters, and the establishment of the only way of life acceptable to God are all aims which merit the sending of God's messengers. They also merit the exertion of great efforts by the messengers as well as the endurance of all the suffering the advocates of Islam have experienced throughout history. This is not because God needs to achieve these aims: He is in need of nothing and no one. They are worthy aims simply because human life cannot be put right, reformed, elevated and become worthy of man without the establishment of the faith based on God's oneness.

NOAH WAS GUIDED

CHAPTER 6: THE 55TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: ... *And Noah We guided before and among his offspring*
are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph
and Moses and Aaron.
And, thus, We gave recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (6:84)

THE PRAYER OF NOAH

CHAPTER 37: THE 56TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah 618: *And, certainly, Noah cried out to Us.*
And how excellent were the ones who answer! (37:75)
And We delivered him and his people
from tremendous distress. (37:76)
And We made his offspring—they, the ones who remain. (37:77)
And We left for him to say with the later ones: (37:78)
Peace be on Noah among the worlds. (37:79)
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good. (37:80)
Truly, he is one of Our believing servants. (37:81)
Again, We drowned the others. (37:82)

COMMENTARY°

This reference to Noah includes his appeal to God and the full answer to his prayer by the best to give such an answer. It also tells of the fact that he and his household were saved from the great floods that drowned all except those whom God willed to be saved. It speaks of God's will to make of his offspring communities which build the earth and establish its heritage, while he himself, would he remembered by future generations until the end of time. It declares to all the worlds God's greeting to Noah, as he was one who fulfilled well the assignment given him. What reward could anyone wish for when he has received God's own greetings and is to be remembered for the rest of time? The mark of Noah's doing well that so ensured his great reward was his unshakeable faith. This outcome is brought about by faith. The unbelievers among Noah's people met their own ruin. (37:82) This has set the rule ever since the dawn of history. It is the pattern given in general terms immediately before these stories.

NOAH DENIED AND THE CONFEDERATES AFTER HIM

CHAPTER 40: THE 60TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *The folk of Noah denied before them*
and the confederates after them.
And every community is about to take its Messenger
and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth.
So I took them.
And how had been My repayment! (40:5)

COMMENTARY°

The people of Noah denied before them and also the factions, such as Aad, Thamud and others, who came after them. And every community sought to seize their messenger, to slay him, and they argued falsely thinking to rebut, to eliminate, thereby the truth. Then I seized them, with punishment; so how fitting was My punishment of them—in other words, it was appropriate.

THOSE WHO DENY THE MESSENGERS ARE PUNISHED

Makkah ... *in like manner of a folk of Noah and Ad*
and Thamud and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

COMMENTARY°

Like the case of the people of Noah, and Aad, and Thamud, and those who came] after them, in other words, the same requital as was customarily dealt to those who disbelieved before you, of their being chastised in this world, and God does not desire to wrong any of His servants.

THE FATE OF THE PEOPLE OF NOAH

CHAPTER 51: THE 67TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And the folk of Noah from before.*
Truly, they had been a folk, ones who disobey. (51:46)

NOAH COMPLAINS TO GOD ABOUT THE ARROGANCE OF HIS PEOPLE

CHAPTER 71: THE 71ST CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Truly, We sent Noah to his folk saying:*
Warn your folk before a painful punishment
approaches them. (71:1)
He said: O my folk! Truly, I am a clear warner to you: (71:2)
Worship God and be God-conscious and obey me. (71:3)
He forgives you some of your impieties
and postpones for you a term, that which is determined.
Truly, when the term of God drew near, it will not be postponed
if you had been but knowing. (71:4)
He said: My Lord! Truly, I called to my folk
nighttime and daytime, (71:5)
but my supplication increases not but their running away. (71:6)
And, truly, as often as I called to them
that You would forgive them,
they laid their fingertips over their ears
and covered themselves with their garments.
And they maintained growing arrogant
as they grew arrogant. (71:7)
Again, truly, I called to them with openness. (71:8)
Again, I spoke openly to them and confided in them,
keeping secret our converse. (71:9)
And I said: Ask for forgiveness of your Lord.
Truly, He had been a Forgiver. (71:10)
He sends from heaven abundant rain for you. (71:11)
He will furnish you relief with wealth and children.
And He will assign for you Gardens
and will assign for you rivers. (71:12)
What is it with you that you hope not
for dignity from God? (71:13)

And, surely, He created you in stages? (71:14)
Consider you not how God created the seven heavens,
one on another? (71:15)
And how He made the moon in them as a light
and how He made the sun as a light-giving lamp? (71:16)
And how God caused you to develop,
bringing you forth from the earth. (71:17)
Again, He will cause you to return into it
and bring you out in an expelling. (71:18)
And how God made for you the earth as a carpet (71:19)
that you may tread in it ways through ravines. (71:20)

NOAH PRAYS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE

They followed such a one whose wealth
and children increase him not, but in loss. (71:21)
And they planned a magnificent plan. (71:22)
And they said: You will by no means forsake your gods,
nor will you forsake Wadd nor Suwa
nor Yaghuth nor Yauq nor Nasr. (71:23)
And, truly, they are going much astray.
And increase Thou not ones who are unjust
but in causing them to go astray. (71:24)
Because of their transgressions, they were drowned
and were caused to enter into a fire.
And they find not for themselves
any helpers other than God. (71:25)
And Noah said: My Lord! Allow not even one
on the earth from among the ones who are ungrateful! (71:26)
Truly, ***You****, if* ***You*** *were to allow them,*
they would cause ***Your*** *servants to go astray*
and they will but procreate immoral ingrates. (71:27)
My Lord! Forgive me and ones who are my parents
and whoever entered my house
as one who believes—the males, ones who believe
and the females, ones who believe
and increase not the ones who are unjust, but in ruin. (71:28)

COMMENTARY°

These signs begin with a statement defining the source of this message of divine faith. (71:1) This is the source that assigns tasks to Gods' messengers and from whom they learn the truth of faith. It is the source of all existence and all life. It is He who created humanity, giving their nature the ability to know and worship Him. When they deviated from this straight path, He sent them messengers to bring them back to Him. Noah was the first of these messengers after Adam. The Quran does not mention a message given to Adam after his fall to earth and life thereon. Perhaps he was a teacher who taught his children and grandchildren. With the passage of time, they went astray and adopted idols as deities. These were at first symbols of certain forces they considered holy. Then, they forgot what the symbols signified and worshipped the idols themselves. God sent them Noah to bring them back to believing in His oneness and give them the right concept of God, life and existence.

Having established the source of the message, these signs sum it up in a few words, and we learn that Noah was instructed to deliver a warning. (71:1) The report Noah presents to his Lord, as stated here shows that the state in which he found his people, heedless and arrogant, makes warning the sum of his message. In fact, the first thing he does by means of advocacy is to warn them of severe punishment, in either this world or the next, or in both.

The signs move straight from assigning the task to its fulfillment, in which the delivery of the warning is prominent. However, this is coupled with a note that raises the hope of the forgiveness of past sins and the deferment of reckoning until the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, the signs give a brief outline of the message Noah delivered to his people. (71:2)

He immediately states his role as a warner, clearly explaining his argument. He does not hesitate or wrap his words in a false cover. He leaves no one in confusion as to what he has to say, or what those who reject his message can expect. What he calls for is plain and simple. (71:3)

All worship must be addressed to God alone, without partners. Fearing God should be the quality that is clearly reflected in feeling and behavior. Obeying the messenger God sends to a people is the attitude that makes His orders the basis on which they build their way of life and how they determine their rules of behavior. These are the broad lines of divine faith in general, but messages may differ in points of detail as also in the concepts they outline, their relative scopes and how profound and comprehensive these are. To worship God alone provides a complete system of life that includes how man visualizes the nature of the Godhead and the nature of servitude to Him, the bond between the Creator and His creatures, as well as the nature of forces and values that operate in the universe and affect human life. Therefore, a system for human life is developed on the basis of this concept, giving a special code of living. This code is based on the bond between God and His servants, and on the values He assigns to all things.

To be God-conscious is the true guarantee that people will follow this code of living, abide by it and never try to circumvent it or slacken in its implementation. Moreover, it is the quality that ensures sound moral behavior that seeks no reward other than being acceptable to God. Moreover, obeying God's messenger is the means that ensures remaining consistent, receiving guidance from its original source. It maintains the link with heaven through the messenger who receives instructions from on high.

These were the broad lines that constituted what Noah called on his people to believe in. They remain the essence of the divine faith for every generation. God promised them in reward what He promises those who turn to Him in repentance. (71:4) This sign states the reward promised for those who respond to the call to worship God alone, fear Him and obey His messenger. The reward is forgiveness of past sins, a respite lasting until the time appointed for reckoning, which means until the Day of Judgment, so that they will not be punished in this life like other communities that were totally destroyed. Later we see that Noah promised his people certain other things to be granted in this life.

Noah also confirms that this appointed time is inevitable: it comes at the moment determined for it. It will not be postponed like the delayed punishment in this world. (71:4) This statement may be understood to apply to every time appointed by God, so as to make this fact clear in their minds. It occurs at the appropriate place here, within the context of the promise that the reckoning will be deferred to the Day of Judgment if they heeded Noah's advice.

UNTIRING EFFORTS

Noah began his noble efforts to present guidance to his people. He had no personal interest in the matter, and stood to make no gain to compensate for all the arrogance and ridicule he had to put up with. He continued to do this for a thousand years minus fifty, with the number of those who responded positively hardly increasing. On the other hand, however, the level of rejection and insistence on following old erring ways did increase. At the end, Noah presented his account to God, who had assigned him this arduous task. He described his efforts even though he knew that God was fully aware of all that he had done. He is, therefore, simply making his heart-felt complaint to God, the only One to whom prophets, messengers and true believers ever complain: Thus, Noah describes his untiring efforts at the end of his long, long journey. (71:5) He never slackened or showed any sign of boredom or despair in the face of determined and increasing opposition. (71:6) They ran away from the messenger who called on them to believe in God, the Giver of life, the Provider of everything they had and the Source of every light and guidance. Yet this messenger from whom they ran away never asked for anything in return for what he presented or taught them. He only called on them to believe so that they might be forgiven their sins.

When they could not physically run away, because he addressed them face to face, taking every opportunity to make his address heard, they loathed listening to him or even looking at him. They turned away in arrogance, intent on following their erring ways. (71:7) In this scene the advocate of the divine faith is seen using every opportunity to deliver his message, while they remain adamant, unwilling to hear. We see humanity here in its early stages, stubborn like a headstrong child, putting its fingers in its ears so that it does not hear, and covering its head and face. It is an image of childish resistance, thrusting their fingers in their ears, yet people can only put the tips of their fingers into their ears. The statement, thus, imparts an impression of violent reaction, as if they wanted to put their whole fingers into their ears to ensure that nothing of Noah's words could be heard. How childish!

In his strenuous efforts to fulfill his mission, Noah used every method, addressing them openly at times, and speaking to them in private on others. (71:8-71:9) In all this, he put before them immeasurable gains both in this life and in the life to come. The first prospect he put before them was forgiveness of their sins. (71:10) He also put before them the prospect of abundant provisions to be granted through rain pouring down in plenty, so that plants can grow and rivers run. He also added other types of God's grace, ones they loved dearly: children and wealth. (71:11-71:12)

Noah linked granting such provisions to seeking God's forgiveness of sins and misdeeds. This correlation between following God's guidance and attaining purity of heart on the one hand and a life of plenty and prosperity on the other is stated in several places in the Quran.

This is, then, a true rule repeatedly stated in the Quran. It is based on certain conditions involving a promise by God and the rules He set for human life. History confirms its fulfillment during different generations. The rule applies to communities and nations, not to individuals. Every community that implemented Gods law, truly looking up to Him, doing good and beneficial deeds and seeking His forgiveness in a way that reflected fearing Him, benefited by this promise. Every community that worshipped God and feared Him, implementing His law and establishing justice and security for all people, was given provisions in plenty and a life of strength and affluence.

Having said this, we realize that some communities are left to enjoy a life of power and prosperity, despite the fact that they are far from being God-conscious or following His guidance. This is merely a test. Moreover, such prosperity is often accompanied by different ills such as the lack of social cohesion, loose morality, injustice, disregard for human dignity, etc. We see today two superpowers, seemingly enjoying power and plentiful provisions: one of them is capitalist while the other communist. In the first, morality has sunk to the lowest level. The prevailing vision of life has become so low that all life has become materialistic, measured by the dollar. In the other, the value of the human being has gone below the level of slavery. Intelligence agencies have become too powerful and people live in constant fear, threatened in their own homes. Several massacres have taken place, and no one is assured that by the morning his head will remain in place. A false allegation can easily find it chopped off. Neither condition can be described as a truly prosperous human life.

We continue with Noah and his untiring efforts. We see him trying to turn peoples attentions to the signs pointing to God, be these from within themselves or in the world around them. He wonders at their carelessness and rudeness. (71:13-71:14)

The stages of creation to which Noah refers must have been something which people either knew about or could understand at that time. He is obviously reminding them of something they know and hopes will have the desired effect of leading them to a positive response. Most commentators on the Quran say that the expression refers to the different stages the embryo goes through, starting with a gamete, then becoming a clinging cell mass, before it becomes a human embryo, and acquires a skeleton and is subsequently given its full shape and form. Noah's people could understand this because pregnant women suffered abortions at different stages of pregnancy, thus giving people a clear idea of how the human grows. This is one interpretation of the statement. It could also be a reference to what embryology says about the creation of the human being. It starts like a one-celled creature, then becomes like a multi-celled creature before acquiring the form of a water animal, then it becomes like a mammal, before it acquires human shape. This was however far from comprehensible to Noah's people, being only a very recent discovery.

Noah draws the attention of his people to look at their creation and how it is done in stages. He reproaches them for knowing this and yet remaining insolent in their attitude towards their Lord. This is all very singular.

Noah directs his people's attention to the open book of the universe. (71:15-71:16) We cannot specify a meaning for the seven heavens on the basis of scientific theories about the universe, for these are only theories. Noah simply draws their attention to the skies. He tells them, as God taught him, that there are seven heavens in layers, and that they include the sun and the moon, which they could obviously see, just as they saw what they called the sky, which is that familiar blue colored space. To know what it is exactly is not necessary. Nor has it been properly proven even today. The invitation to look though is enough to reflect on the supreme power that has brought such great creatures into existence. This is what Noah wanted his people to do. He then invites them to look at their own creation, starting from dust and returning to it after death, and emphasizing the truth of resurrection (71:17-71:18)

The reference to the human being originating from the earth like a plant is both amazing and inspiring. This is certainly worth studying. It suggests that the origins of life on earth are the same, and that the making of the human being is the same as the making of plants. The human being is made of the earth's simple elements and feeds on such elements to grow. Thus, he is a plant like the rest of earth's plants. He is given a form of life different from that of plants, but both originate from mother earth, which suckles them both. We see how faith gives a believer a complete and true concept of his relation to the earth and to other living things. This concept combines scientific accuracy with warm feelings, which is the distinctive mark of true Quranic knowledge.

Those people who came out of the earth will go back into it, because God determines so, just like He brought them into being out of it. Their ashes become mixed with its dust and they become part of it again, just as they were before. Then again, God will bring them out like He did the first time. It is a simple matter that does not require a moments hesitation if we only look at it from this Quranic angle. Noah points out this truth to his people so that they feel how Gods hand lets them grow out of the earth like plants do, and then returns them there. Once they do this, they can easily expect the second life and take it into account. It is so simple and easy, needing no further argument.

Finally, Noah directs his people's hearts to reflect on Gods blessing as He enabled them to live easily on earth, conducting their various activities with ease and comfort. (71:19-271:0) This reality is so close to them and they see it all the time in full view. They cannot escape it like they tried to escape from Noah and his warnings.

In relation to them, the earth is stretched out like a vast expanse. Even in its mountains, God placed paths that are easy for them to traverse. They walk and travel even more easily on the plains. They can thus move about seeking God's bounty, and exchanging goods and benefits. They did not need scientific studies that sought to understand the natural laws that govern and facilitate their life on earth in order to appreciate all this. Indeed, the greater human knowledge gets the more evident the truth of this statement is.

We see how Noah tried to address his people in various ways, employing a wide range of methods. We also see his patience, perseverance and conscientiousness. He continued to exert these efforts over 950 years before giving this report to his Lord, complaining of the response he had had to contend with. From his succinct and accurate account we see a splendid image of the great efforts he made. Yet all this is merely one ring in the chain of divine messages to humanity.

So, what happens next? (71:21-71:24) It is a heart-felt complaint. After all Noah's endeavors, guidance and sound advice and the promise of an easy, plentiful life, they chose to disobey and follow the lead of those who had gone far astray, only because the latter enjoyed wealth, children and power. Yet such leaders benefit nothing by all these blessings. (71:21) What they possessed of wealth and children tempted them to go further astray, a scenario that could only end in misery and ruin. Yet these leaders did not stop at just going astray. (71:22) Their plot was on a grand scale, and its aim was to foil Noah's efforts, to suppress his message and to prevent it from addressing people's hearts. They schemed to give their disbelief and ignorance an attractive color. Therefore, they urged people to adhere to their false beliefs and to continue to worship those idols whom they called gods. They sought to arouse peoples personal emotions, making them feel that these idols were their own gods. They mentioned the names of the most important ones, so as to stir peoples false pride in them. (71:23) These were indeed the largest and the most important of their idols. Indeed, they continued to be worshipped in other ignorant communities until the time of the Islamic message.

This remains the practice of erring leaderships. They create idols that may differ in name and form, according to the going trends in different ignorant societies. They seek to rally the masses around such idols and stir their emotions to defend them so that they can lead them wherever they want to, ensuring that they remain in error. This is how they manage to lead people astray. (71:24) Indeed every type of erring leadership tries to rally the people around idols, which may be in the form of statues, or humans or ideas. They are all the same, manipulated to turn people away from the divine message, creating a schism between them and its advocates. It is all part of a grand scheme, a mighty plot with a selfish end.

A passionate prayer is then voiced by Noah against the oppressors, the wrongdoers who lead people astray through plots and schemes of their own devising. (71:24) It is the prayer of one who has tried for a long time, making every effort and using every method. Eventually, however, he came to the conclusion that those erring, wrongdoing hearts were altogether devoid of goodness, undeserving of divine guidance.

Before completing Noah's prayer, the sign gives us an image of the end suffered by those wrongdoers in this life and in the life to come. Both situations are present in God's knowledge. They are events that admit no change:

Because of their sins, they were drowned, and were made to enter the fire. They found none besides God to support them. (71:25)

It is because of their sins and disobedience that they were made to drown and enter the fire. The two events are intentionally joined in succession, because their entry into the fire is connected to their drowning. The time gap between the two is so short that it is almost non-existent; according to God's measures it is negligible. The sequence is there: they were drowned in this life and they are made to enter the fire in the life to come. What is in between is perhaps the torment in the grave during the short gap between the two lives. (71:25) None whatsoever! No children, no wealth, no power and no patron from among their alleged deities.

In a single short verse, these mighty ones are swept away and no mention is left of them in human memory. No details are given here of their drowning or the floods that swept them away. This because the signs want to leave us with the impression of swift punishment. Indeed, it covers the gap between their drowning and their entry into hell with the conjunction, rendered in translation as and'. This is a common feature of the inimitable Quranic style. Therefore, we do not go into any further details of this event here.

The sign then gives the remainder of Noah's passionate prayer:

In his heart of hearts, Noah felt that the earth needed to have a complete change, a change that would eradicate the evil that had become so deeply entrenched among his people. Sometimes, only such eradication of the wrongdoers from the face of the earth will suffice. Their continued presence may put the divine message under siege, preventing it from touching people's hearts. This is exactly the scenario Noah states in his appeal to God to destroy these tyrannical oppressors, leaving none of them to walk the earth. He says: "If You spare them, they will lead Your servants astray." (71:27) Describing those people forced to go astray as "Your servants" suggests that they are the believers. This is a reference to how such wrongdoers will always use brute force to turn people away from divine faith. He may also mean that they lead others astray when people see them enjoying power and authority, without being punished for their wrongdoing.

Moreover, they create an environment in which the ungrateful are born and reared. This whole environment of ingratitude and its determined rejection of God's message leaves no way for the young to see the light. It overwhelms them with its erroneous beliefs and practices. It is to this fact that Noah, God's noble messenger, refers when he says that these wrongdoers will. (71:27) They create within the community an atmosphere based on falsehood and establish systems, traditions and situations that only help to lead the young into sin and disbelief. Thus, the new generation will always be composed of sinners and the hardened ungrateful as Noah said.

It is for this reason that Noah made his sweeping appeal to God, and God answered his prayer, washing that evil off the face of the earth. Noah ended his appeal against the ungrateful by a request to God to increase their ruin. (71:28)

Noah also made a different sort of passionate and humble appeal to God. (71:28) His prayer that God forgives him his sins is an aspect of the good manners all prophets maintain when addressing God. Noah knows that he is only a human being appealing to God. He knows that no matter how diligent he is in his obedience and worship, he makes mistakes and remains short of the high standard believers should try to attain. He also realizes the truth the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) later expressed when he said that no human being, not even a prophet, is admitted into heaven on the basis of his actions only, unless God bestows His grace on him. This appeal for forgiveness is exactly what he called upon his people to do, but they were too arrogant to take heed. Yet Noah, God s noble messenger who has untiringly sought to advocate God's message, seeks God's forgiveness at the moment he presents his account.

His prayer for his parents is an aspect of dutifulness towards parents who are believers. This is what we understand from the fact that he prayed for them. Had they been ungrateful, he would have been told not to pray for their forgiveness, as he was told that his son, an ingrate, met his merited fate when he was drowned with the rest of the unbelievers.

His special prayer for everyone who entered his home as a believer marks the mutual love between believers. Everyone loves for others to receive the same grace as he receives. This special mention of those who enter his home refers to the fact that they were the ones to be saved from the floods; they were the ones on the Ark with him.

Noah's final prayer is for the forgiveness of all believing men and women throughout all generations and localities. It emphasizes the close bond that unites them all, different as their communities and times may be. This is a remarkable quality of the divine faith, establishing this strong bond of genuine love between all believers across the centuries. It tells of the hidden secret God has incorporated into the divine faith and placed in believers' hearts.

Contrasted with this love among believers is the genuine aversion expressed towards the ungrateful. (71:28) In this way do the digns conclude after having given us a bright picture of Noah's struggle, as contrasted with the stubborn rejection by the ungrateful. It leaves us with feelings of love towards this great prophet, and admiration for his hard struggle. It strengthens our resolve to follow the same route no matter what hardship we have to endure and no matter what sacrifices we are called upon to make. It is the only route that ensures mankind attains the highest standard possible in their life on earth.

THE FOLK OF NOAH DENIED NOAH

CHAPTER 14: THE 72ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Approach not to you the tidings*
of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Ad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.

We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

NOAH HAD BEEN A GRATEFUL SERVANT WHO WAS SAVED

CHAPTER 21: THE 73RD CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And mention Noah, when he cried out before*
and We responded to him.
And We delivered him and his people
from the tremendous distress. (21:76)
And We helped him against the folk who denied Our signs.
Truly, they had been a reprehensible folk.
So We drowned them one and all. (21:77)

NOAH'S MESSAGE TO HIS PEOPLE

CHAPTER 23: THE 74TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah 620: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk.*
And he said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no other god but Him.
Will you not, then, be God-conscious? (23:23)
But said the Council who were ungrateful among his folk:
This is nothing but a mortal like you.
He wants to gain superiority over you. (23:24)
If God willed He would have caused angels to descend.
We heard not such a thing from our fathers, the ancient ones. (23:25)
He is nothing but a man in whom there is madness.
So watch him for awhile.
He said: My Lord! Help me because they denied me.(23:26)
*So We revealed to him: Craft **you** the boat under Our eyes*
and by Our revelation.
Then, when Our command drew near and the oven boiled,
*then, insert two pairs of each kind and **your** people,*
but whomever against whom the saying has preceded.
And address Me not for those who did wrong.
Truly, they are ones who are drowned. (23:27)
*When **you** and whoever is with **you** are seated in the boat,*
then, say: All Praise belongs to God
*Who delivered us from the folk, the ones who are unjust.** (23:28)
*And say: My Lord! Land **You** me with a blessed landing*
*for **You** are Best of the landing-places.* (23:29)
Truly, in this there are signs and, truly,
We had been ones who test. (23:30)
Again, We caused to grow another generation after them. (23:31)

We sent a Messenger to them from among them saying that:
Worship God! You have no god other than Him.
Will you, then, not be God-conscious? (23:32)
And said the Council of his folk to those who were ungrateful
and denied the meeting in the world to come,
and to whom We gave ease in this present life:
This is nothing but a mortal like you.
He eats of what you eat and he drinks of what you drink. (23:33)
And if you obeyed a mortal like yourselves,
truly, then, you are ones who are losers.(23:34)
Promises He that when you died
and had been earth dust and bones,
that you will be ones who are brought out? (23:35)
Begone! Begone with what you are promised! (23:36)
There is nothing but this present life.
We die and we live and we shall not be ones who are raised up. (23:37)
He is nothing but a man. He devised a lie
against God and we are not ones who will believe in him. (23:38)
He said: My Lord! Help me because they denied me. (23:39)
He said: In a little while they will become
ones who are remorseful. (23:40)
Then, a Cry duly took them so We made them into refuse.
So away with the folk, the ones who are unjust! (23:41)
Again, We caused to grow after them other generations. (23:42)
No community precedes its term, nor delays it. (23:43)
Again, We sent Our Messengers one after another.
Whenever drew near a community a Messenger to them,
they denied him.
So We caused some of them to pursue others
and We made them tales.
So away with the folk who believe not! (23:44)

COMMENTARY°

[This signs] begins with a statement defining the source of this message of divine faith. (23:1) This is the source that assigns tasks to God's messengers and from whom they learn the truth of faith. It is the source of all existence and all life. It is He who created humanity, giving their nature the ability to know and worship Him. When they deviated from this straight path, He sent them messengers to bring them back to Him.

Noah was the first of these messengers after Adam. The Quran does not mention a message given to Adam after his fall to earth and life thereon. Perhaps he was a teacher who taught his children and grandchildren. With the passage of time, they went astray and adopted idols as deities. These were at first symbols of certain forces they considered holy. Then, they forgot what the symbols signified and worshipped the idols themselves. God sent them Noah to bring them back to believing in His oneness and give them the right concept of God, life and existence.

Having established the source of the message, [these verses] sum it up in a few words, and we learn that Noah was instructed to deliver a warning. (23:l) The report Noah presents to his Lord, as stated here shows that the state in which he found his people, heedless and arrogant, makes warning the sum of his message. In fact, the first thing he does by means of advocacy is to warn them of severe punishment, in either this world or the next, or in both.

The signs moves straight from assigning the task to its fulfillment, in which the delivery of the warning is prominent. However, this is coupled with a note that raises the hope of the forgiveness of past sins and the deferment of reckoning until the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, the sgns give a brief outline of the message Noah delivered to his people. (23:2) He immediately states his role as a warner, clearly explaining his argument. He does not hesitate or wrap his words in a false cover. He leaves no one in confusion as to what he has to say, or what those who reject his message can expect. What he calls for is plain and simple. (23:3) All worship must be addressed to God alone, without partners. Fearing God should be the quality that is clearly reflected in feeling and behavior. Obeying the Messenger God sends to a people is the attitude that makes His orders the basis on which they build their way of life and how they determine their rules of behavior.

To be God-conscious is the true guarantee that people will follow this code of living, abide by it and never try to circumvent it or slacken in its implementation. Moreover, it is the quality that ensures sound moral behavior that seeks no reward other than being acceptable to God. Moreover, obeying God's messenger is the means that ensures remaining consistent, receiving guidance from its original source. It maintains the link with heaven through the messenger who receives instructions from on high.

These were the broad lines that constituted what Noah called on his people to believe in. They remain the essence of the divine faith for every generation. God promised them in reward what He promises those who turn to Him in repentance. (23: 4) This sign states the reward promised for those who respond to the call to worship God alone, fear Him and obey His messenger. The reward is forgiveness of past sins, a respite lasting until the time appointed for reckoning, which means until the Day of Judgment, so that they will not be punished in this life like other communities that were totally destroyed. Later we see that Noah promised his people certain other things to be granted in this life.

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THE MESSAGE OF NOAH

Noah stayed with his people and exhorted them to goodness for 950 years; but they rejected Noah's exhortation and the flood overtook them.

CHAPTER 29: THE 85TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk*
and he lingered in expectation among them a thousand years
less fifty years.
And the Deluge took them while they were
the ones who are unjust. (29:14)
Then, We rescued him and the Companions of the Ark
and made it a sign for the worlds. (29:15)

GOD FAVORED NOAH

CHAPTER 3: THE 89TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *Truly, God favored Adam and Noah*
and the people of Abraham and the people of Imran
above all the worlds,. (3:33)

GENERATIONS RAISED AFTER NOAH'S PEOPLE DENIED MESSENGERS

Other generations and other messengers one after another sent to warn humanity; every messenger was belied.

CHAPTER 22: THE 103RD CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *And if they deny you surely,*
the folk of Noah denied before you
and Ad and Thamud. (22:42)

UNGRATEFUL WRONG THEMSELVES

CHAPTER 9: THE 113TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *Approaches them not the tidings*
of those before them
—the folk of Noah and of Aad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham,
and of the Companions of Midian,
and that which are cities overthrown?
Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.
So it had not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

COMMENTARY°

Has not the tidings, the tale, of those before them reached them — the folk of Noah, and Aad, the folk of Hud, and Thamud, the folk of Salih, and the folk of Abraham, and the dwellers of Midian, the folk of Shuayb, and the Deviant cities, the cities of the folk of Lot, meaning, its inhabitants. Their messengers brought them clear proofs, with miracles, but they denied them, and so were destroyed. God would never have wronged them, by punishing them for no sin on their part, but they wronged themselves, by committing sin.

THE COMPANIONS OF THE ARK (AL-SAFINA)

CHAPTER 29: THE 85TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent Noah to his folk*
and he lingered in expectation among them a thousand years
less fifty years.
And the Deluge took them while they were
the ones who are unjust. (29:14)
Then, We rescued him and the Companions of the Ark
and made it a sign for the worlds. (29:15)

HUD AND THE PEOPLE OF AAD

CHAPTER 89: THE 10TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
how your Lord accomplished with Aad, (89:6)
with Iram of the pillars (89:7)
of which are not created the likes in the Land? (89:8)

COMMENTARY°

The subject of the oath is omitted, but it is explained by the discussion that follows on tyranny and corruption. The punishment inflicted by God on the insolent, tyrannical and corrupt communities is a law of nature asserted by this oath. (89:6-89:14)

The interrogative form in such a context is more effective in drawing the attention of the addressee, who is, in the first instance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and then all those who may ponder over the fates of those past communities. The people of the Prophet's generation, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were aware of what happened to these nations. Their fates were also explained in reports and stories conveyed by one generation to another. The description of these outcomes as the deeds of God is comforting and reassuring for the believers. It was particularly so to those believers in Makkah who, at the time when this chapter was revealed, were subjected to relentless persecution and hardship by the unbelievers.

These short verses refer to the fates of the most powerful and despotic nations in ancient history. They speak of the earlier tribe of Aad of Iram, a branch of extinct Arabs. They used to dwell in al-Ahqaf, a sandy piece of land in southern Arabia, midway between Yemen and Hadramowt. The Aad were nomadic, using posts and pillars to erect their tents. They are described elsewhere in the Quran as being extremely powerful and aggressive. Indeed they were the most powerful and prestigious of all contemporary Arabian tribes. (Verse 8) The distinction here is restricted to that particular age.

(Iram: According to Islamic beliefs, King Shaddad defied the warnings of the prophet Hud and God smote the city, driving it into the sands, never to be seen again. The ruins of the city lie buried somewhere in the sands of the Rub al-Khali. Iram became known to Western literature with the translation of The Book of One Thousand and One Nights.)

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These short verses refer to the fates of the most powerful and despotic nations in ancient history. They speak of the earlier tribe of Aad of Iram, a branch of extinct Arabs. They used to dwell in al-Ahqaf, a sandy piece of land in southern Arabia, midway between Yemen and Hadramowt. The Aad were nomadic, using posts and pillars to erect their tents. They are described elsewhere in the Quran as being extremely powerful and aggressive. Indeed they were the most powerful and prestigious of all contemporary Arabian tribes. The distinction here is restricted to that particular age.

The interrogative form in such a context is more effective in drawing the attention of the addressee, who is, in the first instance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and then all those who may ponder over the fates of those past communities.

The people of the Prophet's generation, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were aware of what happened to these nations. Their fates were also explained in reports and stories conveyed by one generation to another. The description of these outcomes as the deeds of God is comforting and reassuring for the believers. It was particularly so to those believers in Makkah who, at the time when this chapter was revealed, were subjected to relentless persecution and hardship by the unbelievers.

OTHER WARNERS SENT

CHAPTER 50: THE 34TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: ... *and Aad and Pharaoh*
and the brothers of Lot [denied] ... (50:13)

THE FOLK WHO DENY

CHAPTER 38: THE 38TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *The folk of Noah before them denied*
and Aad and Pharaoh, the possessor of the stakes, (38:12)

THE MESSAGE OF THE MESSENGER HUD

Hud exhorting his people to serve only God and none else; the people challenging Hus against the threats of the wrath of God; the punishment they suffered.

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And to Aad, God sent their brother Hud.*
He said: O my folk!
Worship God. You have no god but He.

Will you not, then, be Godfearing? (7:65)
The Council of those who were ungrateful said among his folk:
Truly, we see foolishness in ***you****.*
And, truly, we think that ***you*** *are among the ones who lie.* (7:66)
He said: O my folk! There is no foolishness in me.
I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds. (7:67)
I state the messages of my Lord to you
and I am one who gives advice to you, trustworthy. (7:68)
Or marveled you that there drew near you
a remembrance from your Lord
through a man from among you that he may warn you?
And remember when He made you viceregents
after the folk of Noah
and increased you greatly in constitution?
Then, remember the benefits of God
so that perhaps you will prosper. (7:69)
They said: Hast thou brought about to us
that we should worship God alone
and forsake what our fathers had been worshipping?
So approach us with what thou hast promised us
if ***you*** *had been among the ones who are sincere.* (7:70)
He said: Surely, fell on you disgrace and anger from your Lord.
Dispute you with me over names which you named,
you and your fathers,
for which God sent not down any authority?
Then, wait awhile. Truly, I will be with you
among the ones who are waiting awhile. (7:71)
Then, We rescued him and those with him by a mercy from Us.
And We severed the last remnant of those who denied Our signs.
And they had not been ones who believe. (7:72)

COMMENTARY°

They followed the same pattern as Noah's people, rejected the warnings, and refused to reflect on what happened to those who went along before them. (Verse 65) This implies a strong criticism of their attitude as they show no fear of God and no worry about a terrible destiny.

THE PEOPLE OF AAD

CHAPTER 25: THE 42ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: ... *and Aad and Thamud*
and the Companions of the Rass

and many generations in between that. (25:38)

COMMENTARY°

And, mention, Aad, the people of Hud, and Thamud, the people of Salih, and the dwellers at al-Rass — the name of a 'well'; their prophet is said to have been Jethro (Shuayb); although some say it was someone else. The story is that they had been sitting around it on one occasion when it collapsed beneath them burying them together with their dwellings. And many generations, peoples, in between, that is, between the people of Aad and the dwellers at al-Rass.

HUD ADVISES HIS PEOPLE TO GUARD THEMSELVES AGAINST EVIL

CHAPTER 26: THE 47TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *The Aad denied the ones who are sent* (26:123)
when their brother Hud said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:124)
Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you, (26:125)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:126)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:127)
Build you a sign on every high hill to amuse? (26:128)
And take you for yourselves castles
so that perhaps you will dwell in them forever? (26:129)
And when you seized by force,
seized you by force haughtily? (26:130)
So be God-conscious and obey me. (26:131)
Be God-conscious of Him Who furnished relief to you
with all that you know. (26:132)
He furnished relief to you with flocks and children (26:133)
and gardens and springs. (26:134)
Truly, I fear for you the punishment
of a tremendous Day. (26:135)
They said: It is equal to us whether you were to admonish
or you have not been among the ones who admonish. (26:136)
Truly, this is nothing but morals of the ancient ones (26:137)
and we are not ones who are punished. (26:138)
So they denied him and We caused them to perish.
Truly, in this is a sign yet most of them
had not been ones who believe. (26:139)
And, truly, your Lord, He is, certainly,
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:140)

COMMENTARY°

The story of Hud and his people has the same beginning as Noah's story: The Aad, too, denied God's messengers. Their brother Hid said to them: Will you have no fear of God? I am a Messenger [sent by Him] to you, worthy of all trust. So, fear God and pay heed to me. No reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of all the worlds. (26:123-26:127)

It is the same message given by every messenger of God: it is a call to believe in God alone and to fear Him and obey His messenger. This is coupled with a declaration disclaiming any interest in worldly luxuries or position the people may have to offer. This puts things in the right perspective. The messenger seeks nothing from them, but instead he looks to God for his reward.

Had follows this declaration by examining their own particular conditions and behavior. He criticizes the fact that they build lofty buildings to demonstrate their ability, taking pride in their wealth. He denounces their arrogance which results from their material power and the resources that enable them to use different forces and means, in total disregard of God, oblivious to the fact of their accountability to Him. (26:128-26:129)

It seems that they used to build on high places so as to make such structures appear from a distance as grand landmarks. They did so to emphasize their superiority and great ability. Hence the Quran describes it as a vain endeavor. Had it been intended as a landmark or a sign to show direction, it would not have been described as such. The Quranic statement, then, implies the need to direct one's resources and abilities to what is of benefit, not merely to show off and demonstrate abilities and wealth. It also appears that the people of Aad were well advanced in industry, using machinery to carve positions for their palaces that they built on mountains. This is indicated in what Hud said to them. (Verse 129) It even occurred to them that such strong structures built with the use of heavy machinery could spare their lives, and protect them from severe atmospheric conditions as also from enemy attack.

They have further practices that are strongly criticized by Hud. (26:130) They were mighty, hard, tyrannical and would deal with others using utmost cruelty, like many others who rely on material power.

Hud, therefore, reminds them that they must fear God and obey His messenger. This would be sure to redress their cruelty and put a stop to their arrogance. (26:131) He further reminds them of God's grace, as it is He who has favored them with His blessings that they use arrogantly as also to oppress others. They should have remembered God's favors and given thanks for them. They should also bear in mind that the One who has granted them such favors can easily take them back, or punish them for putting His favors to wrong use. (26:132-135)

Hud's reminder mentions first the One who granted them such blessings before enumerating them. He then gives further details." (26:133-134) These were the best favors that they could have enjoyed during that period of time. They are indeed a great favor at any time. He then warns them against punishment that may befall them on an awesome day. His warning expresses his fear for their end, because he is one of them, their brother, and he wants to spare them the hardship of that day which is certain to come.

But his reminders and warnings do not touch their hardened hearts. They stubbornly refuse to mend their ways. (26:136) This is a derogatory way of speaking, one which expresses their carelessness for whatever he might say. They add a clear indication that they are hardened in their ways, relying totally on what they have inherited from previous generations. (26:137-138) Their only argument in defense of all the practices Hud has criticized them for is that they are following earlier generations, towing their line. They then deny the possibility of being punished for following in their ancestors' footsteps. (26:138)

[These verses do] not mention here any of the arguments that took place between them and Hud. It proceeds straight to the end (26:139) These two short sentences, expressed in the original Arabic text by only two words, fakadhdhabuhu faahlaknahum, spell out the end of the mighty people of Aad and their great symbols of power. Nothing is left of their luxuries, cattle, children, gardens and springs.

How many a community has followed the same practices as the people of Aad, moving further away from God with every new aspect of civilization they have achieved. They always think that man can be independent of God. They try to produce weapons to destroy others while ensuring their own security. Yet it may be only a day or a night and such a community finds itself subjected to God's punishment. (26:139-140)

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But his reminders and warnings do not touch their hardened hearts. They stubbornly refuse to mend their ways. This is a derogatory way of speaking, one which expresses their carelessness for whatever he might say. They add a clear indication that they are hardened in their ways, relying totally on what they have inherited from previous generations. Their only argument in defense of all the practices Hud has criticized them for is that they are following earlier generations, towing their line. They then deny the possibility of being punished for following in their ancestors' footsteps.

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How many a community has followed the same practices as the people of Aad, moving further away from God with every new aspect of civilization they have achieved. They always think that man can be independent of God. They try to produce weapons to destroy others while ensuring their own security. Yet it may be only a day or a night and such a community finds itself subjected to God's punishment.

They did not soften to their brother's call when he said to them. (26:106) Will you not worry about the end to which your attitudes and actions lead you?

This directive and reminder to fear God is consistent in [these verses]. We saw it with Pharaoh and his people as God informed Moses of his assignment. Then every prophet that succeeded Noah said the same thing to his community. (26:107) He would not cheat, defraud or act dishonestly. He would not add to, or withhold anything from what he was required to deliver to his people. (26:108) In this case, Noah again reminds his people to fear God, giving it a more express definition this time. He appeals to their consciences to obey him as he calls on them to surrender themselves to God.

THE MESSAGE OF HUD

CHAPTER 11: THE 52ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And to Aad, their brother Hud.*

He said: O my folk! Worship God!
You have no god other than He.
You are nothing but ones who devise. (11:50)
O my folk! I ask not of you any compensation.
My compensation is but with Who originated me.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (11:51)
And O my folk! Ask your Lord for forgiveness.
Again, repent to Him. He will send abundant rain to you from heaven
and increase you, adding strength to your strength.
So turn not away as ones who sin. (11:52)
They said: O Hud! Have You brought about any clear portent for us?
We will not be ones who leave our gods for thy saying?
And we are not ones who believe in you. (11:53)
Truly, we say nothing but that some of our gods inflicted you with evil.
He said: Truly, I call God to witness and bear you witness
that I am free from partners you ascribe (11:54)
other than Him. So try to outwit me altogether.
Again, give me no respite. (11:55)
Truly, I put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord.
There is not a moving creature
but He is One Who Takes of its forelock.
Truly, my Lord is on a straight path. (11:56)
But if you turn away, that is your decision.
Then, surely, I expressed to you what I was sent with to you.
And my Lord will make successors a folk other than you and you will not injure Him at all.
Truly, My Lord is Guardian over everything. (11:57)
And Our command drew near.
We delivered Hud and those who believed with him by a mercy from Us.
And We delivered them from a harsh punishment. (11:58)
And that was Aad. They negated the signs of their Lord
and rebelled against His Messengers.
And they followed the command
of every haughty and stubborn one. (11:59)
And they were pursued in the present life by a curse.
And on the Day of Resurrection, no doubt, truly,
Aad were ungrateful to their Lord.
Away with Aad, a folk of Hud! (11:60)

COMMENTARY°

Every messenger was sent to his own community. At the start of his message, the messenger would be a member of his community, addressing them as a brother, desiring for them all the goodness a brother desires for his siblings. He wanted them to have all the goodness he had found in God's guidance, and for which he found clear evidence granted by his Lord. This was the attitude of every single messenger at the beginning; but it was not the same with any of them at the end.

A group from among every community responded to the message. They began to worship God alone. Thus, they surrendered themselves totally to God, forming together a community of believers, or a Muslim community, in the broader sense of the term. Another group rejected the message, denying its truth and continuing to submit to deities other than God. They remained in ignorance. Thus, they became a community of ungrateful.

This means that by their different attitudes towards God's messenger and his message, the same people became two communities: one Muslim and the other idolater. They were no longer one community, despite being of the same race and origin. Ties of race, land and common interests could no longer unite them and govern their relations. With the divine message a new bond came into being, uniting or dividing the same people. This is the bond of faith, with the type of submission it requires and the code of living it lays down.

What the advocates of Islamic revival today must clearly understand is that God never set the believers apart from the unbelievers until the believers themselves split away from the rest of their people. In so doing they declared their rejection of idolatry, submitted to God alone, and refused to obey any tyrannical authority. They also refused to participate in the social life of the community ruled by an authority implementing laws different from those of God.

God did not act to destroy the wrongdoers until the believers had separated themselves from them. This means that the believers must declare to the rest of their people that they are a community apart, with a distinctive faith, way of life and line of action. This is essential before God acts to fulfill His promise of granting victory to the believers and inflicting His punishment on the unbelievers.

It is particularly important that advocates of Islamic revival should understand this constant rule so as to plan their method of operation. The first step is to call on people to submit themselves to God alone, and to no one else. The same people will eventually split into two groups. The believers then separate themselves from the rest. When all this takes place, God's promise to grant victory to the believers becomes due for fulfillment, as consistently happened throughout history.

The period of advocacy and calling on people to believe may be prolonged before the separation occurs in practical terms. However, mental separation should start right at the beginning. Separating the two communities may be delayed, while one generation or more of believers provide sacrifices and endure hardship and torture. The believers must, nevertheless, remain convinced that God's promise is more true than the apparent reality. It will not fail to come at the appropriate time. God never fails to honor His promises.

WHO UNDERSTANDS THE QURAN?

These observations about the historical accounts given in the chapter reveal to us the nature of the Islamic approach, as outlined in the Quran. It is a practical approach in the face of human realities. These histories were related to the Prophet when he was in Makkah. The small number of believers were confined to their city, and the message practically besieged within it. The road ahead must have seemed to those believers to be long, arduous and without an end in sight. These histories showed them the end and outlined the different stages ahead. The Quran thus took the believers by the hand, helped them on the road that had become a continuation of the march tha started at the beginning of human history advocating the true faith of self-surrender to God alone. Thus, they no longer felt that their road was deserted. They felt themselves to be a new group in a continuous procession walking along a well-charted road. They moved from the starting point to the finishing line according to a well-defined plan.

Thus did the Quran act with the Muslim community, moving it in safe and measured steps. Thus it can do today and in future with the advocates of Islamic revival, moving them along the same way. These advocates need the Quran as a guiding light, marking its movement and outlining its stages.

When the Quran plays this role, it is no longer treated as mere words recited for blessing. It comes alive as if it is being bestowed now from on high to guide the Muslim community which implements its directives and hopes for the fulfillment of God's promise which it clearly states.

This is what we mean when we say that this Quran reveals its secrets only to the Muslim group that moves according to its guidance, to put its message into practice. It does not reveal these secrets to those who only read it for blessings, artistic or scientific study, or to appreciate its artistic beauty and fine style. None of these will truly appreciate much of the Quran, because the Quran was not bestowed from on high for such purposes. It was rather revealed to act as a practical guide providing directives for implementation.

Those who face up to ignorance with the message of Islam, and who endeavor to return erring humanity to the faith based on submission to God alone, and who strive against tyranny in order to liberate humanity from servitude to others, are the ones who truly understand the Quran. They are the ones who live in an environment similar to that which prevailed when the Quran was revealed. They make the same attempt made by those who were the first to be addressed by the Quran. As they make their endeavors, they appreciate the meaning of its verses, because they see how such meaning applies to events and practical situations. This by itself is compensation for all the pain they have to endure and the sacrifice they have to make.

What am I saying? Is it compensation? Certainly not. It is a great blessing from God.

Every messenger was sent to his own community. At the start of his message, the messenger would be a member of his community, addressing them as a brother, desiring for them all the goodness a brother desires for his siblings. He wanted them to have all the goodness he had found in God's guidance, and for which he found clear evidence granted by his Lord. This was the attitude of every single messenger at the beginning; but it was not the same with any of them at the end.

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The Punishement Following Denial

Chapter 54: The 37th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *Aad denied. So how had been*
My punishment and My warning? (54:18)
Truly, We sent a raging wind against them
on a day of continuous misfortune, (54:19)
tearing out humanity as if they had been
uprooted palm trees, uprooted. (54:20)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:21)
And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:22)

Commentary°

The people of Aad also rejected the truth. How grievous was My punishment and how true were My warnings? We sent against them a howling cold wind on a day of unceasing misfortune: it swept people away as though they were uprooted palm trunks. How grievous was My punishment and how true were My warnings? We have made the Quran easy to bear in mind: will anyone take heed? (Verses 18-22)

The scene is violent and fearful; the storm wind sent against the Aad was one of Gods forces. It is a natural phenomenon God has placed in the universe. It operates according to the universal system He has chosen. He sends it against whomever He wishes. It continues to operate within natural laws, where there is no conflict between its normal operation in the planned order of things and its fulfillment of God's orders whatever they happen to be. It is He who set this natural law and issued the command. (Verse 21) This statement is now repeated after the scene has been shown providing the answer. The episode concludes with the other comment repeated throughout the surah according to its own flow: We have made the Quran easy to bear in mind. (Verse 22)

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THE PEOPLE OF AAD

CHAPTER 40: THE 60TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And he who believed said: O my folk!*
Truly, I fear for you like a Day of the confederates, (40:30)
in like manner of a folk of Noah and Aad and Thamud
and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

THE CREATION OF THE EARTH AND THE HEAVENS

CHAPTER 41: THE 61ST CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *But if they turned aside, then, say:*
I warned you of a thunderbolt
like the thunderbolt of Aad and Thamud. (41:13)
And when the Messengers drew near before them
and from behind them saying: Worship none but God,
they said: If our Lord willed,
He would have caused angels to descend.
Then, truly, in what you were sent,
we are ones who disbelieve. (41:14)
As for Aad, they grew arrogant on the earth without right
and they said: Who is more vigorous than us in strength?
Consider they not that God Who created them,
He was more vigorous than they in strength?
And they had been negating Our signs. (41:15)
So We sent on them a raging wind in days of misfortune
that We might cause them
to experience the punishment of degradation in this present life.
And the punishment in the world to come will be more degrading;
and they will not be helped. (41:16)
So We sent on them a raging wind in days of misfortune that We might cause them to experience the punishment of degradation in this present life. And the punishment in the world to come will be more degrading; and they will not be helped. (41:17)

We delivered those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (41:18)

COMMENTARY°

If they turn away, say: Warn you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt that struck the Aad and Thamud. There came to them, from all directions, Messengers saying: Worship none but God. (41:13-18)

What sort of effect did this warning have on the unbelievers in Makkah? Ibn Ishaq, an early biographer of the Prophet, gives us the following story:

Another report by Jabir suggests that when the Prophet recited these verses, Utbah listened. When the Prophet read verse 13, Utbah put his hand on the Messenger's mouth and appealed to him by the ties of kinship to his people to do nothing of the sort.

Then Utbah left him, went home and stayed in doors. His people talked to him later about this and he explained his position: When Muhammad spoke this warning, I appealed to him not to do so. You know that when Muhammad says something, he does not lie. I feared that such punishment be inflicted on you."

This is, then, one image of the effect of the warning as stated by God's Messenger to a person who did not believe in his message.

What does this warning signify: (41:13) Essentially, it begins , fresh round showing us images of the fates met by earlier communities who rejected Gods message. The reckless arrogance of the present unbelievers is thus made all the more apparent through this reminder of what happened to similarly reckless and arrogant peoples: (41:14) This is the single issue as presented by all God's Messengers; it states the central point in every divine religion.

They answered: If our Lord had wished, He would have sent down angels. We will never believe in your message. (Sign 41:14) Similarly, this represents the same point of doubt faced by every Messenger. Yet a Messenger addressing human beings could not be other than human. This so that he would know the people he addressed and they would know him. In essence, a Messenger should provide a practical example and share his peoples problems. Yet the (Ad and Thamud declared themselves unbelievers simply because the Messengers sent to them were human like themselves. They were not angels as they wanted them to be.

Up to this point, the chapter speaks of the fates of both peoples as if they are one: both were struck by thunderbolts. Now, the chapter gives us some specific details about both peoples: (41:15) The right attitude is that all creatures should submit to God and that people should not behave arrogantly. Who, then, are the Aad in comparison to God's great creation? All arrogant behavior, by whatever creature, is against all right. Yet these people thought themselves powerful. They asked: Who is mightier than us? This is the false sense exhibited by all tyrants when they feel that they have silenced all opposition and that none can stand against their power. They forget the truth: (41:15)

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How the People of Aad Were Punished

Chapter 46: The 66th Chapter Revealed

Makkah: *And remember the brother of Aad*
when he warned his folk in the curving sandhills.
Warnings passed away before and after him saying:
Worship nothing but God.
Truly, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day. (46:21)
They said: Hadst thou drawn near to us to
mislead us from our gods?
Then, bring us that which thou hast promised us
if thou hadst been among the ones who are sincere. (46:22)
He said: The knowledge is only with God
and I state to you what I was sent with,
but I see that you are a folk who are ignorant. (46:23)
Then, when they saw it as a dense cloud
proceeding towards their valleys,
they said: This is a dense cloud, that which gives rain to us.
Nay! It is what you seek to hasten, a wind

in which there is a painful punishment. (46:24)
It will destroy everything at the command of its Lord.
So it came to be in the morning nothing
was seen but their dwellings.
Thus, We give recompense to the folk, ones who sin. (46:25)
And, certainly, We established them firmly in what We established
you firmly not and We made for them the ability to hear and sight
and minds. Yet having the ability to hear availed them not, nor
their sight, nor their minds at all since they had been negating the
signs of God. And surrounded were they by what they had been
ridiculing. (46:26)

COMMENTARY°

The brother of the Aad is the Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) who is mentioned here by his position as a brother to his people. This highlights the relation of mutual love and care that existed between him and his people, which should have made them more responsive to his call and motivated them to think well of him and what he taught. The same bond existed between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his people who similarly opposed him.

The Aad used to build their homes on the high sand dunes in a valley in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, said to be near Hadramawt. God in His glory directs His messenger to remember Hud and how he warned his people at the Valley of the Sand Dunes. This to give him encouragement as he realizes that Hud was similarly rejected by his people. Such remembrance also serves to remind the Makkan unbelievers of the fate of those earlier communities that rejected God's messages.

Hud warned his people, but he was not the first messenger to warn his community. Other messengers did the same before him. (46:21) Worshipping God means faith at heart and a code of living. To discard all this inevitably leads to terrible suffering in this present life, or in the life to come, or in both. When reference is made to a day, as it is made here, it means the Day of Judgment when the suffering is far greater and more terrible.

What response did Hud's people give him for his caring instructions and warnings? (46:22) Their response betrays mistrust, lack of understanding, rejection of the warning, hastening the punishment he warned them against, arrogance and a persistent adherence to false beliefs.

For his part, Hud receives all this with patience, showing the manners that behove a prophet. He makes no personal claims as he outlines his attitude and makes his limits clear to them. (46:23) I am giving you this warning as I was commanded to do, but I do not know when such punishment fails, or what form it will take. All this is known to God alone. I am only delivering a message entrusted to me, making no further claim. (46:23) What could be more foolish and insolent than to give such a hostile reception to a brother who is only offering sincere and honest advice?

The signs give no further details of the long argument that took place between Hud and his people, moving straight to report on the fate they suffered. This is intended here as a reply to their challenge and hastening of punishment: Reports suggest that the Aad suffered a period of intense heat, coupled with absence of rain. They endured this unbearable climate for some time. Then God sent them clouds, and they were delighted. They went into the surrounding valleys hoping that rain would quickly ensue. Yet the truth of what the clouds brought signified their ultimate demise: This is a universal fact that the Quran is wont to impress on people. This universe is alive, and every force in it is aware of what God wants of it, proceeding to fulfill it. The human being is one of these forces. When he is a true believer, his heart becomes open to greater knowledge and he becomes able to understand more of the universal forces around him and respond to them. This opens the way to a mutual response that differs from what people generally know of life and understanding. Everything around us has life, but we do not appreciate this because shapes and forms limit our understanding. The universe around us is full of secrets that are appreciated by faculties of understanding, even though they cannot be seen by our eyes.

The storm wind fulfilled the task assigned to it, destroying everything. (Verse 25) No trace of the Aad was left behind, not even their animals or belongings. Everything disappeared. All that was left were desolate dwellings, empty, lacking all signs of life. (46:25) This rule applies to all guilty people.

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THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE OF AAD

CHAPTER 51: THE 67TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And in Aad, when We sent against them*
the withering wind. (51:41)
It forsakes not anything it approached,
but made it like it was decayed. (51:42)

WRONG ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE ANCESTORS

CHAPTER 14: THE 72ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Approach not to you the tidings*
of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Aad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.
We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

THE PEOPLE OF AAD AND THE DAY OF DISASTER

CHAPTER 69: THE 78TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And what would cause thee to recognize*
what The Reality is? (69:3)
Thamud and Aad denied the Day of Disaster. (69:4)
Then, as for Thamud, they were caused to perish
by a storm of thunder and lightning. (69:5)
As for Aad, they were caused to perish
by a fierce and roaring, raging wind. (69:6)
It compelled against them for seven
uninterrupted nights and eight days
so will you see the folk in it laid prostrate
as if they had been uprooted fallen down date palm trees? (69:7)
Then, will you see of them any ones who endure? (69:8)

SATAN MADE THEIR ACTIONS PLEASING TO THEM

CHAPTER 29: THE 85TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Madinah: *And Ad and Thamud, surely, it became clear to you*

from their dwellings.
Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them
and barred them from the way
and they had been ones who see clearly. (29:38)

So We took each of them in his impiety.
And of them was he on whom We sent a sand storm
and of them was he whom the Cry took
and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow
and of them were some whom We drowned.
And God had not been doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong themselves. (29:40)
Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

SALIH AND THE PEOPLE OF THAMUD

The story of Salih and the people of Thamud is similar to that of the story of Hud and the people of Aad.

CHAPTER 89: THE 10TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And with Thamud, those who hollowed out the rocks in the valley?* (89:9)
And with Pharaoh, the possessor of the stakes, (89:10)
those who were defiant in the land (89:11)
and made much corruption in it? (89:12)
So your Lord unloosed on them a scourge of punishment. (89:13)
Truly, your Lord is, surely, on the watch. (89:14)

COMMENTARY°

The Thamud (89:9) used to live at Al-Hijr, a rocky tract in northern Arabia, on the road from Madinah to Syria. They excelled in using rocks to build their palaces and homes. They also dug shelters and caves into the mountains.

These people were all transgressors throughout their lands, bringing about much corruption there. (89:11-89:12) Corruption is an inevitable result of tyranny, and it affects the tyrant and his subjects alike. Indeed, tyranny ruins all human relations. It forces human life out of its healthy, constructive and straight path and diverts it into a line which does not lead to the fulfillment of the human beings's role as God's vicegerent on earth. Tyranny makes the tyrant captive of his own desires because he is uncommitted to any principle or standard and unrestrained within any reasonable limit. Thus the tyrant is always the first to be corrupted by his own tyranny. He assumes for himself a role other than that of a servant of God, entrusted with a specific mission.

Tyranny also corrupts the masses, as it humiliates them and compels them to suppress their discontent and hatred. It kills all human dignity and wastes all creative talents, which cannot flourish except in an atmosphere of freedom. A humiliated soul inevitably rots away and becomes a breeding ground for sickly desires. Therefore, digression from the right path becomes the order of the day as clear vision becomes an impossibility. In such conditions no aspiration to a higher human standard can be entertained. The net result of all this is the spread of corruption.

Tyranny also destroys all healthy standards and concepts because they constitute a threat to its existence. Therefore, values are falsified and standards are distorted so that the repulsive idea of despotism becomes acceptable as natural. This, in itself, is great corruption.

When these aforementioned peoples caused such corruption, the remedy was, inevitably, a complete purge: (89:13-89:14) God is certainly aware of their deeds and He records them all. So, when corruption increased, He severely punished the corrupt. The text connotes that the punishment was very painful as it uses the term 'scourge', or 'whip' as the Arabic term literally means, and that it was in large supply as indicated by use of the phrase 'let loose'. Thus these tyrants were made to suffer a plentiful and painful retribution.

As the believer faces tyranny in any age or place, he feels great reassurance emanating from far beyond the fates of all those communities. He also feels a particular comfort as he reads the verse: (89:14) Nothing passes unnoticed and nothing is forgotten. So let the believers be always reassured that God will deal, in time, with all corruption and tyranny.

Thus the chapter provides some examples of what God may do about the cause of faith. All these stories are related for a definite purpose, namely, the education of the believers and their preparation to face whichever course God chooses for them. They will, then, be ready for all eventualities and equipped with God's reassurance as they submit themselves to Him and let His will be done.

He sees, records, holds to account and rewards according to a strict and accurate measure which neither errs nor exceeds the limits of justice. (89:14) It is never deceived by appearances because it judges the essence of things. Human measures and standards are liable to all sorts of errors. The human being sees nothing beyond appearances unless he adopts the divine measure.

THE INGRATITUDE OF PREVIOUS PEOPLE

CHAPTER 53: THE 23RD CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *and that He caused to perish*
the previous Aad (53:50)
and Thamud. He caused none to remain (53:51)

THE ARMIES OF THE THAMUD

CHAPTER 85: THE 27TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Approached you*
the discourse of the armies (85:17)
of Pharaoh and of Thamud? (85:18)

COMMENTARY°

Examples of this are given: *Approached you the discourse of the armies of Pharaoh and of Thamud?* (85:17-85:18) This is a reference to two long stories well known to the addressees. The two nations concerned are described here by the term "the hosts" in reference to their might and equipment. Have you heard their stories and how God did with them as He pleased? Theirs were two stories, different in nature and consequence. Pharaoh and his army were eliminated when the Children of Israel were saved by God. He gave them power to rule for a certain period in order to accomplish a certain scheme. As for the Thamud, God exterminated them and saved His messenger, Salih, along with his few followers. The believers in this instance did not establish a state of their own; they were merely saved from corrupt enemies.

Both stories are manifestations of the divine will and its performance. They provide two examples of what may befall advocates of the Quranic faith. They are mentioned along with a third possibility which distinguishes the pit event. The Quran explains all three eventualities to the believers in Makkah and to all generations of believers.

THE THAMUD DENIED SALEH

CHAPTER 91: THE 26TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Thamud denied because*
of their overboldness. (91:11)
When the disappointed among them were aroused, (91:12)
and the Messenger of God said to them:
Allow watering to the she-camel of God. (91:13)
Then, they denied him; then, they crippled her.
So their Lord doomed them for their impiety. (91:14)
Then, He leveled them.
And He fears not its Ultimate End. (91:15)

THE MESSAGE OF SALEH

CHAPTER 7: THE 39TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And to Thamud God sent their brother Salih.*
He said: O my folk!
Worship God! You have no god but He.
Surely, drew near you clear
portents from your Lord. This is the she-camel of God
as a sign so allow her to eat on the earth of God
and afflict her not with evil
so a painful punishment not take you. (7:73)

And remember when He made you viceregents after Aad
and placed you on the earth.
You take to yourselves palaces on the plains
and carve out the mountains as houses.
So remember the benefits of God.
And do no mischief as ones who make corruption
in and on the earth. (7:74)
Said the Council of those who grew arrogant among his folk
to those who were taken advantage of due to their weakness,
to those who believed among them:
Know you that Salih is one who is sent from his Lord?
They said: Truly, in what he was sent,
we are ones who believe. (7:75)
Those who grew arrogant said: Truly, we are in what you
believed, ones who disbelieve. (7:76)
Then, they crippled the she-camel
and defied the command of their Lord
and they said: O Salih! Approach us
with what you have promised us
if you had been among the ones who are sent. (7:77)
So the quaking of the earth took them.
And it came to be in the morning
they were in their abodes ones who are fallen prostrate. (7:78)
Then, he turned away from them and said:
O my folk! Certainly, I expressed to you the message
of my Lord and advised you,
except you love not the ones who give advice. (7:79)

THE DEFEAT OF THE CONFEDERATES

CHAPTER 387: THE 38TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *and Thamud and a folk of Lot*
and the Companions of the Thicket.
Those were the confederates. (38:13)

THE PUNISHMENT GIVEN TO THE UNGRATEFUL IN THE PAST

CHAPTER 54: THE 37TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Thamud denied the warning* (54:23)
for they said: Follow we a lone mortal from among us?
Truly, we would be going astray and insane. (54:24)
Is it that the Remembrance was cast down

to Salih from among us?
Nay! He is a rash liar! (54:25)
They will know tomorrow who the rash liar is! (54:26)
Truly, We are ones who sent the she-camel
as a test for them.
So you be on the watch for them
and maintain patience. (54:27)
And tell them that the division of the water
is between them.
Every drink was that which is divided in turn. (54:28)
But they cried out to their companion,
and he took her in hand and crippled her. (54:29)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:30)
Truly, We sent against them one Cry
and they had been like straw
for the one who is a builder of animal enclosures. (54:31)

PARABLES GIVEN ABOUT THE THAMUD

CHAPTER 25: THE 42ND CHAPTER REVEALED

and Ad and Thamud and the Companions of Rass
and many generations in between that. (25:37)
And We propounded parables for each of them. (25:38)
And We shattered each a shatterig. (25:39)

THE MESSAGE OF SALIH

CHAPTER 11: THE 52ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And We sent to Thamud their brother Salih.*
He said: O my folk! Worship God.
You have no god other than He. He caused you to grow
from the earth and settled you on it.
So ask for His forgiveness.
Again, repent to Him.
Truly, my Lord is Near, One Who Answers. (11:61)
They said: O Salih! Surely, you had been
one who is a source of hope to us before this.
Have you prohibited us that we worship
what our fathers worship?
And, truly, we are in uncertainty
about what you have called us to, in grave doubt. (11:62)
He said: O my folk! Considered you that I had been

with a clear portent from my Lord
and that He gave me a mercy from Himself
so who, then, would help me against God
if I rebelled against Him?
Then, you would increase me not but in decline. (11:63)
And: O my folk! This is the she-camel of God, a sign for you.
So let her eat on God's earth
and afflict her not with evil
so that a near punishment take you. (11:64)
But they crippled her.
So he said: Take joy in your abode for three days.
That is a promise, one that will not be belied. (11:65)
Then, Our command drew near. We delivered Salih and those
who believed with him by a mercy from Us
and from the degradation of that Day.
Truly, your Lord, He is Strong, Almighty. (11:66)
The *Cry took those who did wrong. It came to be in the morning in*
their abodes, ones who are fallen prostrate, (11:67)
... as if they dwelt not in them. No doubt, truly, Thamud were
ungrateful to their Lord. Away with Thamud. (11:68)

***

And O my folk! Let not your breach with me drive you
into being lighted on by the like of what lit on a folk of Noah
or a folk of Hud or a folk of Salih
And a folk of Lot are not far from you. (11:89)

***

... as if they had not been dwelling in them.
Away with Midian just as Thamud was done away. (11:95)

***

THE SHE-CAMEL WRONGED

CHAPTER 17: THE 50TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And nothing prevented Us from sending the signs,*
but that the ancient ones denied them.
And We gave to Thamud the she-camel
—the one who perceives—but they did wrong to her.
And We send not the signs, but as a deterrence. (17:59)

THE PEOPLE OF THAMUD DENY SALIH

Makkah: *And Thamud denied the ones who are sent* (26:141)
when their brother Salih said to them:
Will you not be God-conscious? (26:142)

Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you, (26:143)
so be God-conscious and obey me. (26:144)
And I ask you not for any compensation for it.
My compensation is only from the Lord of the worlds. (26:145)
Will you be left ones who are safe in what you have here (26:146)
in gardens and springs (26:147)
and crops of slender spathes of date palm trees? (26:148)
Will you carve houses out of the mountains
as ones who are skillful? (26:149)
So be God-conscious and obey me. (26:150)
Obey not the command of the ones who are excessive, (26:151)
who make corruption in and on the earth
and make not things right. (26:152)
They said: Truly, ***you*** *are only of the ones*
against whom a spell is cast. (26:153)
You *are not but a mortal like us.*
So bring us a sign if ***you*** *had been of the*
ones who are sincere. (26:154)
He said: This is a she camel. She has a right to drink
and you have a right to drink on a known day. (26:155)
And afflict her not with evil so that
you should take the punishment of a tremendous Day. (26:156)
But they crippled her and, then,
it came to be in the morning that they are
ones who are remorseful. (26:157)
So the punishment took them. Truly, in this is a sign
yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:158)
And, truly, ***your*** *Lord! He is, certainly,*
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:159)

CHAPTER 27: THE 48TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent to Thamud*
their brother, Salih,
that they worship God!
Then, when they became two groups of people
striving against one another, (27:45)
Why ask you not for forgiveness of God
so that perhaps you will find mercy? (27:46)
They said: We auger ill of you and whoever is with ***you.***
He said: That which is your omen is with God.
Nay! You are a folk who are being tried. (27:47)
And there had been nine groups of persons in the city

who make corruption in the earth
and make not things right. (27:48)
They said: Swear to one another by God:
We will, certainly, attack him by night and his people.
Again, we will, certainly, say to his protector:
We bore not witness to the destruction of his people
and, truly, we are ones who are sincere. (27:49)
So they planned a plan and We planned a plan
while they were not aware. (27:50)
So look on how had been the Ultimate End of their planning!
Truly, We destroyed them and their folk one and all. (27:51)
And that are their houses, ones that have fallen down
for what they did wrong.
Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who know. (27:52)
And We rescued those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (27:53)

GOD WANTS NOT INJUSTICE FOR HIS SERVANTS

CHAPTER 40: THE 60TH CHAPTER REVEALED

And he who had beleive said: O my folk!
Truly, I fear for you like a day of the confederates, (40:30)
like the custom of a folk of Noah
and Aad and Thamud and those after them.
And God wants not injustice for His servants. (40:31)

THE THAMUD WARNED OF A THUNDERBOLT

CHAPTER 41: THE 61ST CHAPTER REVEALED

But if they turned aside, then, say: I warned you of a thunderbolt
like the thunderbolt of Aad and Thamud. (41:13)

THE THAMUD WERE GUIDED

CHAPTER 41: THE 61ST CHAPTER REVEALED

And as for Thamud, We guided them,
but they embraced blindness of heart instead of guidance.
Then, a thunderbolt took them with a humiliating punishment
because of what they had been earning. (41:17)
We delivered those who believed
and had been God-conscious. (41:18)

TIDINGS OF THE THAMUD

CHAPTER 51: THE 67TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *And in Thamud, when it was said to them:*
Take joy for a while. (51:43)
Yet they defied the command of their Lord so the thunderbolt took
them while they look on. (51:44)
They were neither able to stand up
nor had they been ones who are aided. (51:45)

CHAPTER 14: THE 72ND CHAPTER REVEALED

Approach not to you the tidings of those before you:
The folk of Noah and Ad and Thamud
and of those after them.
None knows them but God.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents,
but they shoved their hands into their mouths in denial.
Then, they said: Truly, we disbelieved in what you were sent
and we are in uncertainty about that to which you call us.
We are in grave doubt. (14:9)

THE INEVITABLE

CHAPTER 69: THE 78TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Thamud and Aad denied the Day of Disaster.* (69:4)
Then, as for Thamud, they were caused to perish
by a storm of thunder and lightning. (69:5)

THE THAMUD TAKEN FOR THEIR IMPIETY

CHAPTER 29: THE 85TH CHAPTER REVEALED

So We took each of them in his impiety.
And of them was he on whom We sent a sand storm
and of them was he whom the Cry took
and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow
and of them were some whom We drowned.
And God had not been doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong themselves. (29:40)

THE THAMUD CITY OVERTHROWN

CHAPTER 9: THE 113TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—
the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud,
and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian,
and that which are cities overthrown?

Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.
So it had not been God who did wrong to them,
rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (9:70)

THE COMPANIONS OF THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)

CHAPTER 15: THE 54TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Certainly, the Companions of the Rocky Tract*
denied the ones who are sent. (15:80)
And We gave them Our signs. Then, they had been ones who turn
aside from them. (15:81)
And they had been carving out
safe houses from mountains, (15:82)
but the Cry took them in that which is morning. (15:83)

Al-Hijr was the capital city of the people of Thamud. Its ruins are found near the modern city of Al-Ula which is to the north west of Madinah and lies on the route from Madinah to Tabuk. Though the caravans had to pass through the valley of al-Hijr, the Prophet had forbidden Muslims to stay in the valley on their journey.

When Ibn Batutah reached there in the eighth century of Hijrah on his way to Makkah, he wrote: "I have seen the buildings of Thamud hewed into red mountains; the paintings look so bright as if they have been put on only recently.... and rotten bones of human beings are found in them even today."

That is, their strong and secure buildings, which they had hewed into the mountains, could not protect them from the blast.

THE PEOPLE OF THE DITCH (AL-UKHDUD)

CHAPTER 85: THE 29TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: ... *the Companions of the Ditch were slain,* (85:4)
possessors of the fuel of the fire (85:5)
above which they were ones who sit, (85:6)
as they were, in what they accomplish against the ones who believe,
ones who bore witness. (85:7)

THE PEOPLE OF TUBBA

We have no information about the people of Tubba, a tittle used by the Yemeni kings of the Himyar dynasty.

CHAPTER 44: THE 64TH CHAPTER REVEALED

Makkah: *Are they better or a folk of Tubba*
and those who were before them?
We caused them to perish.
They, truly, had been ones who sin.(44:37)